

Transcript - April 2 AmeriCorps Rulemaking Session

AMERICORPS RULEMAKING SESSION

APRIL 2, 2004

ARLINGTON, TEXAS

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PROCEEDINGS

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MS. BROWN: Nancy Brown, the executive director of Governor's Commission on Community Service, Colorado.

I started too formal, so I'm going to say David, Rosie and representatives from the Corporation and then all of you great community service folks out there, welcome and thank you for letting me speak today. The rest is written because I have a short period of time here, but I am the executive director for the Governor's Commission on Community Service in Colorado. I've been on the job a whole nine months, so, David, I know what it's like to be new and please don't ask any hard questions.

In this nine months, I've observed the transition of the AmeriCorps program. I started just a few days in finding out that we were having huge slot reductions. I wasn't told that in the interview; I think they thought I would quit. But I've also seen some wonderful things happen in this year and starting in a difficult year makes it easier to go on, then, to a good time, so I'm excited about continuing on in this wonderful, new time for AmeriCorps, for volunteerism, and for community service.

On behalf of the Colorado Commission and our programs, here are my comments regarding rulemakers in these -- rulemaking in these specific areas. On sustainability, federal funds can be used most effectively to meet community needs by providing the money to start community service programs. Under the AmeriCorps model of funding, the goal of sustainability is for programs to be able to operate with less reliance on federal funding. At the point where federal funding represents less than 50 percent of the program's budget, a new set of requirements should be enacted or -- if we do use requirements. There are difficul- -- these are difficult times for securing private funds. In a tight economy, the funds available are limited, especially in smaller communities such as rural areas. I would ask the Corporation to be flexible and allow the commissions to determine what the criteria should be for limiting the years of funding. Commissions know their state and will take into consideration the location of the program, potential availability of private funding or grants, the community need for this type of program, time and operation and the relationship the program has in the community. Measurements for sustainability should impro- -- include a proven volunteerism plan and capacity building. Although, I think it's fine for AmeriCorps members to participate in fundraising for their program, I encourage the Corporation to consider the stipulations placed on a program for AmeriCorps members and balance it out allowing plenty of time for the member to truly serve in the community.

The rules should clearly specify that program staff are allowed to fundraise on these dollars. Perhaps non-stipended volunteer recruitment is one true mark of sustainability for programs. On the federal share, the Corporation should calibrate in-kind and -- and -- in-kind matching requirements to reflect the differences among programs, such as size, location, or performance record. In-kind donations can be a good measure of sustainability, but without a catch -- cash match, a program would not be able to survive. The Colorado Commission has found increasing match requirements to be the better choice over limiting years of funding. Identifying best practices starts with sharing best practices. I encourage the Corporation to take a more active role in tapping into these sources and expertise of the state commissions for suggestions on best practices that might serve as the national model for all commissions. The Corporation should continue to set clear, simple, realistic formats for performance measures and evaluation with again input from the commissions.

I agree with the importance of tutors having the skills and ability to tutor. However, I'm concerned about requiring volunteers, and in this case AmeriCorps members, to have paraprofessional qualifications and para- -- paraprofessional tutors. If this requirement is enacted, I think it will be difficult to recruit members for this position -- these positions. Perhaps the term could be changed from tutoring to reading or literacy specifically so there is a differentiation between math and science

I'll submit the rest in writing because I want to say before concluding my remarks, I would like to publicly thank AmeriCorps director, Rosie Mauk, for her perseverance during our difficult year, her genuine caring spirit, her professional responses to criticism and her demonstrated strength of character. Rosie, I look up to you as a leader. It's a privilege to work under your great guidance. Mr. Eisner, I look forward to anticipating -- with anticipation to working with you, and I'm impressed with your willingness to solicit feedback in state commissions and other interested constituents in the field of community service and volunteerism. Thank you.

MS. VAN DER VEER: Thank you, Nancy.

Jack, before you speak, I just want to mention that after all the four panelists speak, we are going to take some questions from Rosie, David, and Donna, so before the second panel comes up, there will be some time for questions if there's any clarification that's necessary.

With that, Jack, five minutes.

MR. HERRON: Yes. I am Jack Herron, and I represent the Oklahoma Community Service Commission. I am the current chair and just through happenstance, I've been on the Commission since we started it ten years ago. I will say on behalf of Oklahoma we have here today resource persons who -- who rode down with us -- Charles Mohr, who is the person who really developed the Learn and Serve America in Oklahoma and we have Nancy -- Nancy Sharrock, who's the only executive director we've ever had. I would like to further say that as -- as I come to these meetings and we appreciate the opportunity to come to this hearing today -- really when we listen to everyone else, we have the same visions and same goals and really feel about everything -- I would second what the lady who preceded me said. We think it's extremely important that your commission executive director has a vision and your whole staff have a vision on where they want to head on these things. Nancy, in coming down -- had just been to Washington, D.C. where she saw many of you in a meeting and she kindly described

David Eisner to us and after hearing him today, I will say, sir, we appreciate you being here, but I would second most everything you said. We feel that most of the things you mentioned as concerns such as building trust, accountability, and management and response to customers is absolutely essential, and if you would have had our entire commission here to hear you speak, they would have just stormed right down the line, ditto, ditto, ditto, and they stress it's extremely important along with effective training in your programs and oversight of programs.

I was a little concerned about what everyone meant by trust, but I think now I understand that's -- that means that there are assurances that you'll do what you say you will do and we were probably prepared as well as anybody in Oklahoma -- I don't know about the other states, but we've just been through a two-year devastating downturn in our economy. As a result, we found ourselves concerned about the assurances of could we do what we say we were going to do, and as a result of that, because the whole state of Oklahoma was concerned about downturn, we probably were -- really when we told some of the programs they would not exist because of the downturn in funding, they probably accepted what we told them because that was the state of mind in the whole state of Oklahoma. On the way down, we really dealt with and discussed two rules. The rules we were most interested in regardless of sustain- -- sustainability. Back when our commission became an entity, we built in a sustainability capability immediately and we even sat down some rules that programs would last for three years. Our group determines and decided that the Oklahoma Commission encourages and supports sustainability. We would like to have the ability, though, to determine the sustainability requirements based on individual communities and their needs. We find in Oklahoma that every community is a little different. I personally, up until last year, have read every program that sent in a proposal through the ten years, and so I don't know whether that was good or bad, but I read fast. I -- I gained an expertise on evaluating these proposals, and so they had me read them every year, and we really found this great difference in communities. Originally, because we'd put in a three-year sustainability component, we found that a lot of the programs were only beginning to peak, and I can't put this into the record, but I'll show you. You know, if you use the bell curve, you're either headed up or headed down and most every time we've reached the end of the three years, we're

almost at the peak. So we felt that some of those programs needed to go a little longer and they needed our help to do it. As a result, we've had some programs that became completely self-sustainable, some who we continue to support, and we went on. Some organizations were created solely to run an AmeriCorps program. And there's a time limit that these programs will end. We have continued to add new programs through the years and one solution may be to set aside a percent of dollars for new programs.

Regarding continuation, we believe programs should be funded over three years and not go through the application process each year. The Commission reviews and monitors these programs closely because they require accountability and we do this on a regular - regular basis and we do not recommend funding a program if they're not meeting the needs and the standards that we -- we so desire. Thank you.

MS. VAN DER VEER: Thank you, Jack.

Betsy.

MS. LAWSON: Hi. I'm Betsy Lawson, and I'm testifying today as the program manager for ComputerCorps, which is one of the three AmeriCorps programs that is operated by American Youth Works in Austin, Texas. Our three AmeriCorps programs are Casa Verde Builders, which builds award-winning, energy-efficient homes for first-time low-income homebuyers; Environmental Corps, which builds parks and trails to support tens of thousands of community members who use and benefit from Austin's parks, and ComputerCorps, which bridges the digi- -- the digital divide by teaching computer literacy to disadvantaged individuals. And I'm in a unique position to talk about a new program that got off and running and then lost its funding due to last year's cuts, and the other which is ComputerCorps and the other two programs, Casa Verde Builders and Environmental Corps, which are senior programs that have been around for over ten years.

By design, all of our AmeriCorps programs consist of members that represent our most challenged youth. 80 percent are from low-income households. 76 percent are minorities. 22 percent are on probation or parole. 13 percent, parenting teens. And also by design, most of our members have dropped out of high school and face low academic achievement skills, but they come to us for a way back through education, learning job skills, and becoming self-sufficient in a sense.

As our first point in this testimony, we believe that AmeriCorps should not entitle long-term programs but neither should it limit successful AmeriCorps fundings through a specific number of years. It's our strong belief that opposing time limits on how long programs can receive funding will dramatically scale back federal support over time, will only weaken tenured programs, and therefore dramatically reduce the overall effectiveness of AmeriCorps.

Our case in point is ComputerCorps. ComputerCorps was started in 2000, and I've been in my role for a year and a half now, but it's my understanding in the first two years that most of the energy in doing a start-up is spent forming partnerships, setting up site placements, learning the rules and ways of AmeriCorps, understanding WBRS and -- and the STA tracking system. And it was in our third year, once ComputerCorps completely established itself, that we made a significant impact on the community, so there was a little bit of a ramp-up period. In that third year, we were able to teach computer literacy to 400 low-income community members, and we were able to help our own members either get jobs -- meaningful career-starting jobs or get into college or a trade school, so we're really proud of that. But just as we got fully up and running, we lost our funding.

Now, contrast that to Casa Verde Builders. Casa Verde is a seasoned program with over ten years of AmeriCorps experience, and it's able to build upon its success year after year and able to make a greater and greater impact on the community. Casa Ver- -- Casa Verde has built over 78 new homes for first-time homebuyers that will generate over \$1 million in property taxes by 2006. This amount virtually covers the entire amount of funding that we get from AmeriCorps, thus making funding a wash. Also, Casa Verde builds award-winning, energy-efficient homes that will result in tremendous energy savings. The average ener- -- energy expenditure for five of our homes is the same as that of four normal homes. And Casa Verde has recruited over 750 non-AmeriCorps volunteers to have performed over 10,000 hours of community service. New programs can't come close to achieving those results. We recommend setting aside a percentage, maybe perhaps one-third of the funding for new programs, but not

limiting funding for long-term programs. We also recommend that the level of funding be based on program results and community impact.

Secondly, we believe that AmeriCorps programs, such as ours, that serve very low-income members and communities should be expected -- should not be expected to fully sustain itself in the long run without federal funding. As a seasoned program, we're proud to have the diversity of funding sources including other federal funding from HUD, the Department of Labor and the EPA. We also have funding from the state, city, corporations, individuals, and foundations. However, even with all those funding sources in place, we don't see a time where we can operate without federal funding.

And finally, American Youth Works is excited to continue its long-term partnership with AmeriCorps. I thank you for the opportunity to provide input in this process.

MS. VAN DER VEER: Thank you, Betsy.

Okay. Elisa.

MS. VILLANUEVA: Hi. My name's Elisa Villanueva, and I'm the executive director for Teach for America in the Rio Grande Valley. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of Teach for America this afternoon. We very much appreciate the fact that you are holding these public hearings and providing for other avenues for the field to share their experiences in national service over -- over the years.

So as you may know, Teach for America is a national, professional corps of outstanding recent college graduates who commit two years of teaching at urban and rural public schools and become lifelong leaders in an effort to ensure that all children in our nation have an equal chance at life. Currently, Teach for America has more than 3,000 corps members teaching in twenty regions across the country. Although Teach for America is no longer an AmeriCorps national direct program, I have enjoyed the opportunity to work with Charlie Briggs and his seemingly helpful staff as part of the Texas -- present Texas State AmeriCorps Program. We've been very excited to forge this connection at the state level.

I am, as I said, the executive director and also had the opportunity -- opportunity to be part of Teach for America as a 1998 alum. Through my experience, I know that I gained the commitment, passion, and energy to continue to work in this movement and have wanted to stay true and -- and part of it, and -- so I've become part of the staff and been doing this for three years now. In the Rio Grande Valley, we have more than 130 of the nation's top recent college graduates teaching in 54 schools in 11 districts in the lowest income areas of rural South Texas.

While I realize there are many critical issues to discuss today, I would like to focus on the importance of professional corps within AmeriCorps. I believe that AmeriCorps should have a catalytic role in participa- -- in producing and growing more professional corps in this country. Investing resources and energy in this area would be an efficient, highly effective way to leverage social impact and improve the lives of Americans. I also believe, however, that the current structure of AmeriCorps, in particular the timing of the grant cycles and the criteria for evaluating grants and measuring their impacts, inhibits the growth and success of professional corps.

AmeriCorps has developed guidelines and processes around the kinds of programs that form the heart of the current national service infrastructure. To create a different field of -- to create a different molded program, though, programs that will attract top college graduates across the spectrum of fields and direct their talents toward meeting needs through critical professions, AmeriCorps short -- should make some significant changes.

Professional corps programs must, by design, operate on a very different calendar than most other service corps. Professional corps members are hired by outside entities that pay the members' salaries. Negotiating placement positions and ensuring that the members are prepared to meet specific professional needs requires operating a recruitment schedule far in advance of the members' ultimate placement. At Teach for America, for example, we begin recruiting in September twelve months in advance of the following school year. We know that we are competing with investment banks, graduate schools, and other top post-graduation options. We also need to be able to tell our community partners, the school districts, and schools that employ our members with as much accuracy as possible the number of teachers we can bring with a variety of subject areas and grade levels. In addition to the timing of grants, I believe that the current AmeriCorps guidelines are not conducive to measuring professional corps programs. Teach for America's president and founder, Wendy Kopp, will present written testimony that discuss specific issues related to these guidelines. Issues that include leveraging of volunteers, citizenship, training and the definition of community partners.

I'd also like to take one brief comment -- make one brief comment on the issue of sustainability. I strongly believe that graduation requirements for grantees is not the way to build a strong AmeriCorps program. Since the inception of AmeriCorps, all programs have applied or reapplied for funding and have went through a very competitive grant process. This competitive process allowed the Corporation to fund programs that that have the greatest impact on local communities, whether they are new or have been around for many years.

Forcing programs to graduate from AmeriCorps does not take into account the performance and the impact of the program. I thank you for your time and for the undertaking of your rulemaking process. Thank you.

MS. VAN DER VEER: And I want to thank you, everyone in the panel, for sticking to the five minutes. That was perfect. Thank you.

Okay. Now, Donna, David, and Rosie, are there some questions that you have for this panel?

MS. WILLIAMS: I have one question for Jack. You mentioned that -- specifics in the communities -- that you guys really know the communities and you know what should be -- let me -- let me phrase it differently.

How long is it before you know a program is not going to perform?

MR. HERRON: We require our commission and our staff to be out there constantly to look at the programs. We discussed that on the way down today because it's so difficult obviously to evaluate and what are the tools to evaluate. We discussed tools, so I -- I have great confidence in our staff. I would say they know almost, you know, immediately from visiting the community. They go out and do site -- on-site visits, as

you would expect, and visit the communities. They know pretty much immediately. They also conduct statewide training sessions of which I mentioned a training component. We believe that's important not only in training commissions on what their duty is but go out into the field and -- Charles Mohr, for example, of Learn and Serve America is one of the best trainers you'll ever find. You ought to go hear him train. I wanted to mention, but due to the lack of time, I did not mention -- we, too, like the other states have said -- we'd encourage them. We'd love to have anybody from national to come and visit Oklahoma and visit our programs, likewise from other states, the same thing, so -- so we all have mostly the same interests.

MS. WILLIAMS: Okay. After you determine that they're not performing, what is the process to get them up to speed and going from there with them?

MR. HERRON: Yes, and I may leave something out. We usually bring to the Commission an outline of problems. And the Commission, either through the executive committee of the Commission or the Commission as a whole, discusses these and then we encourage our staff to meet with them, bring them in, see if there's a way we can bring them up to speed. We -- we believe in going the extra mile to work with them and sometimes that process may last two or three years to work with them to see that they're given a chance to perform at the level we desire.

MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

MR. EISNER: I -- I have a few questions.

Nancy, thanks for walking through the -- some of the ways you deal with sustainability in -- in Colorado. As far as the graduated matching requirements, two related questions. One is do you make exceptions for organizations that are in particularly rural or remote areas? And second, have you found that -- or any organizations have been unable to meet the matching requirements and have had to fall out of the program in a way that you didn't -- didn't think made sense? MS. BROWN: Well, again, David, because I'm new, historically, I can't answer that as accurately as one of our program officers could, but I would say yes, we take into account their location and -- and if it's a rural area that it might be a little bit more difficult for them to raise the match. As far as a program falling out, I don't know historically, but what I do know is the same thing that this gentleman was just talking about. We offer technical guidance and assistance to our programs on -- on a daily basis. Our program officers are on the phone with our programs on a daily basis, so we try not to let them ever get in a situation where they can't meet their match because we're always talking to them; I'm always talking to them, too. So I think for the most part, because of our training and technical guidance, we're able to help them, but do they worry about that, yes. We worry about that as a state commission getting no state funding.

MR. EISNER: So you don't just make the requirement, you help them meet it?

MS. BROWN: Right. Exactly.

MR. EISNER: The second question, I was very intrigued by your note that -- that when programs had less than 50 percent funding, they receive -- they receive a different kind of oversight. Was this a recommendation for us or is this the way that you currently operate?

MS. BROWN: Yes, that's actually a recommendation for you from our programs and from our program officers. According to our senior program officer, she sees that the -- the requirements stay the same, even though the -- the funding goes down, so she's asking you to consider lowering the requirements as the funding is lowered.

MR. EISNER: Thank you, Nancy.

Jack, we've heard a few times about the desire to enable state commissions to be flexible and to manage their own sustainability plans. How would you recommend to the Corpora- -- or -- or what kinds of brackets would you say that the Corporation might put on -- if we basically said, per your suggestion, okay, state commissions have to do their own sustainability plans, what kinds of requirements should we be putting in place that tells state commissions that they're somehow meeting those expectations?

MR. HERRON: Okay. In defending the sustainability question, we went back, as I mentioned, and reviewed what have we done, and from the beginning, we put in requirements such as that. And I don't know -- this is one where I might ought to refer to staff on what they really want because our commission was very strong about it, and we set down our own rules, but we learned, as we went into the communities, we had to have that flexibility and those rules because of the differences between communities, so I don't know if that's the best answer. I don't know if I can answer what you're asking.

MR. EISNER: I'd -- I'd be grateful if your staff -- or if you wanted to follow up. I think the underlying question here is, we -- you know, there may be a way that we could say potentially let commissions develop their own sustainability plans, but then we'd like to have some sort a benchmark.

MR. HERRON: Sure. Certainly. And so we had anticipated --

MR. EISNER: We have national -- national standards --

MR. HERRON: We anticipated -- so let me just defer to Nancy. Nancy, what would you comment?

MR. EISNER: Are you going to speak later?

MS. VAN DER VEER: She's on the list to speak.

MR. EISNER: You're on the list?

MS. SHARROCK: (Moving head up and down.)

MR. EISNER: Okay. Well, we'll -- we'll get to that then.

MR. HERRON: We anticipated that question, but I would rather she state what they need.

MR. EISNER: Terrific. I have so many questions. I'm sorry.

Betsy, I want to know when you said perhaps one-third of the portfolios would be made up of new programs, is that a shot in the dark or were you -- were -- had you given

some thought to the one-third of the portfolio being -- new programs being a good target number?

MS. LAWSON: That was a recommendation from our senior program officer, Dick Pierce, who runs all three programs and -- and put the funding together for all three, so I think it was somewhat thought out by him --

MR. EISNER: Thank you.

MS. LAWSON: -- and it was just a suggestion.

MS. MAUK: I was just going to ask Bet- -- Betsy to take just a minute and talk about knowing the type of members that you-all recruit in your program. Do you -- do you think -- you've kind of referenced the fact it would be very difficult for you-all to not receive any federal funding and keep going forward. Is that because you think that your type of program is more expensive? I mean, we've been hearing from folks around the country about the different types of programs. You know, it's one of our issue areas, and I'm wondering if you could just go a little bit deeper there.

MS. LAWSON: I think there -- there are a couple of things that maybe make it definitely more expensive and one that comes to mind is we have -- I know all programs get stipends, but there's an even greater need for -- for stipends to -- for -- for our population. They could not -- absolutely could not participate in our programs if they were not paid a decent minimum wage, and the second thing is that we provide a lot of counseling services and American Youth Works is a one-stop with a health center, career center, intensive counseling, but all of those things need to be funded, and that's part of our success in turning lives around.

MS. MAUK: Okay. Thank you.

MS. VAN DER VEER: Thank you to this panel.

And I'd like the next group to please come to the table. We have Julie Thomas, Susan Weddington, Jason Sabo, and Wendy Elliot, and we'll go ahead and have you speak in that order, please.

And I'd like to call up to be on deck, Rick Cavender, Sylvia Reyna, Alissa Magrum, and Mary Ellen Isaacs. If those four individuals would come up and sit in the front row, please.

Okay. Julie, five minutes.

MS. THOMAS: Thank you. I'm Julie Thomas. I am the executive director of the Volunteer Center of North Texas, and I have a cough drop in my mouth so please excuse me, but it's necessary for me to continue here. I realize this is the last of five hearings and I frankly -- and Rosie would agree -- believe that they save the best for last, wouldn't you agree? Coming to Texas is a real treat. I have been the executive director of the Volunteer Center of North Texas for seventeen years. I thought I'd come for -- and stay for about a year and a half, learn more about the non-profit sector, and here, I've completed seventeen years.

What we do is provide many, many different services that are related to the volunteer needs non-profit organizations experience. We serve 1700 non-profits. The list starts with the American Red Cross and it ends with the zoo. The North Texas structure enables us to provide individualized service in three different counties. The structure enables us to realize tremendous efficiencies -- offering efficiencies and also to have much more clout with the media, which is a very important issue in our field. So that structure, however, also encourages individual volunteer centers to deliver services with the unique flavor of their community. Rosie was one of the founding members of this particular structure.

In North Texas last year, we made approximately 77,000 traditional volunteer referrals. We provided thousands of hours of consulting and training to organizations that was primarily designed to help them better manage their volunteer programs. Media provided nearly \$1 million worth of free space and air time so that we could tell our story and explain the needs of the community. 360 volunteer centers across the country participated in a structure that is called the Volunteer Center Network -- National Volunteer Center Network. Each center in their community, regardless of how small, helps to develop this network of traditional volunteers. Many in this room have a deep appreciation for AmeriCorps and we all believe that the best is yet to come, and we thank you, David, for your leadership in that regard.

During the last difficult Congressional session, we observed that AmeriCorps received strong support, which was bipartisan, since I visit with conservative Texas Republicans in Congress on a regular basis. I know that that's very unusual, so I think now the -- the view -- the national view of AmeriCorps is that it is good for America, not just one party or another, and I think that's great.

One of our nation's most precious characteristics is traditional volunteering. It's the heart and soul of our spirit. Typically you know that volunteerism refers to the traditional giving of time with no stipend. We all know that AmeriCorps does not -- does not present a stipend. It's a unique hybrid program in terms of its volunteer structure. That structure has been challenged many times over the last decade, and there are those who have said AmeriCorps is an outsider in the -- in the volunteer world because of this stipend. I would suggest that providing a climate where AmeriCorps can really thrive and flourish is going to require forging a very strong alliance with traditional volunteerism that has not existed in the past.

After observing the program for a decade, I believe that the local structure necessary must do this and I also see that very logical ways of bringing this about would be through the Volunteer Center Network. I believe that -- and this is not just my opinion, folks, but -- but it represents, I think, the view of many of my colleagues in the volunteer center world. AmeriCorps needs to develop four specific focuses -- foci. They need the ability to connect people locally with a dynamic way to identify and recruit AmeriCorps participants. They need assistance that enables more local non-profit organizations to understand how to develop and sustain AmeriCorps programs. They need promotion -- AmeriCorps needs promotion in local communities so that communities, businesses, funders, individual givers will understand and appreciate the value of AmeriCorps. They need more education at the local level that will enable programs and goals -- AmeriCorps programs and goals to strategic -- to -- to educate other non-profits by AmeriCorps. The structure and mission of the volunteer center world is based on those four core competencies. We connect people. That infrastructure could apply to AmeriCorps as well. We build capacity in the non-profit

sector to receive and productively manage volunteers. We promote volunteers -- volunteerism using established pro bono media, which could be used for AmeriCorps, and we participate in strategic relationships, partnerships throughout the non-profit sector. I see the value of forging these specific links with volunteer centers that exist already, rather than establishing a new pattern, a new structure but rather the efficiency of building on what already exists. I believe that such a linkage will multiply the value of both forms of volunteerism exponentially, and it will help AmeriCorps become a permanent part of America's non-profit sector. Thank you very much.

MS. VAN DER VEER: Thank you, Julie.

Okay. Susan, five minutes, please.

MS. WEDDINGTON: Welcome to the One Star State. I'm Susan Weddington, president of One Star Foundation. We are actually two 501(c)(3)'s hooked together as a family. We are the One Star family. One of our (c)(3)'s is the One Star National Service Commission. The other is the Foundation. The Commission sets the policies, and the Foundation conducts all the administrative functions for that program. We are -- I guess you could say national service plus is where we're going. We have been designated as Texas' first office of faith-based and community initiatives. We also have a state program department which is Governor's Mentoring Initiative, so we are looking to leverage those departments in order to allocate -- spread our allocations out for administrative functions so we can free more programmatic dollars to -- or for support of growth and -- you know, and program -- for developing programs rather than just administering them. We feel that there's a benefit to that. I am new. I was just in Washington with the state commission directors and about a third of us had been there less than a year, about a third less than five years, and a third had been there forever, and -- so it was a great group with a lot of different vision, and -- and what it shows me that the last ten years, which I have termed the decade of destiny building for national service, is now moving into the next generation, and -- you know, 10-year-olds look very different than 20-year-olds, and so I know that, you know, ten years from now there'll still be new challenges, but I'm thrilled and delighted with your leadership and what you've brought through the challenging years, Rosie, so we're looking forward to the next years.

I -- I just want to speak really -- because a lot of people are going to speak about, you know, very programmatic things -- kind of through these fresh eyes. One thing is as I looked at this program that came into our family, it was a bit overwhelming at first just to get a -- get a handle on, and it seemed challenging, but then when we view challenge as opportunity. My greatest excitement was when I began to learn of all the different aspects of national service, the different programs, and how they were building blocks for a complete whole.

I was playing with my grandson with his Lincoln Logs and go -- say there you have this stuff that fits into AmeriCorps and then SeniorCorps and then you've got this wonderful bigger whole and you've just built a beautiful building. And so one thing I would hope is that, perhaps over the next ten years, we start seeing the whole national service program as more of a family of -- of tools in which we are building a house together -- building things together, utilizing all the pieces of the tools because there's some fantastic tools there if they're strategically linked together.

I also -- looking at state commissions and it was interesting to me this week to hear from state commissions. I think we're kind of a strange duck in a lot of states in -- in the fact that we're federally created and called a state commission. Many of them don't receive any state funding, whatsoever, and they don't have a vision as being -- or don't seem to many, including, I would say, in Texas, have current -- have seen themselves or been seen as sort of the expert on connecting -- I mean, on -- on bringing all the tools to bear and being a value to the state, and I think that in part of the next generation, the next ten years, that is not the Corporation's responsibility as much as the state commissions to play a very strong part in identifying who we are, what we bring to the state, what value we bring to the state and then reporting that to the Corporation for you to use at the federal level to help us continue to do that. So I think it is a growing-up stage. I think that in Texas we are not going to wait any more for you to assign tasks. We're going to take the lead. We're going to make it happen.

On sustainability, I would just say that I learned that there's many different needs across the state. Certainly in Texas, we have big cities and rural areas, and I would suggest, perhaps, looking at setting some goals with some opportunity for waivers, perhaps, where you justify an exception to some goals that are set. And just the flexibility to allow us to leverage. I think the state comm- -- I think where we can be helpful to state commissions is to get a lot more understanding and training on how to work to leverage fed- -- federal dollars coming into the state so that we can plug our tools into some of the other grants and get a better product, if you will, for the dollars that are coming into the state. So I look forward to working with you and we're glad you're here in Texas. Thank you.

MS. VAN DER VEER: Thank you so much, Susan.

Jason.

MR. EISNER: Just a quick point really. I -- I want to thank Susan and the One Star Foundation for all its support and help in having this meeting happen and the support for the various meetings and functions that happened around this meeting. You made it possible. I appreciate it.

MS. VAN DER VEER: Go ahead, Jason.

MR. SABO: My name is Jason Sabo. I'm the public policy director at United Ways of Texas. United Ways of Texas is a member and volunteer association of local United Ways in our state. We have probably 75 members ranging in size from the local United Ways here in the metroplex, which raise millions of dollars, to entirely volunteer United Ways in small communities around the state. I would like to first off praise you-all for the process that you've employed here in terms of this flexible dialogue in advance of rulemaking going on around the country and soliciting input. I think this is a really terrific model, and thank you for doing so.

And additionally, the -- your friend alike having testified mostly in front of the Texas legislature, I can assure you that a warm orange glow is considerably friendlier than a salty West Texas ranchers, slash, legislator.

MS. VAN DER VEER: Thank you, Jason.

MR. SABO: And we also have to say that we applaud the administration and Congress for the continuing support of AmeriCorps. As everyone in the room knows, local United Ways support thousands of organizations. There's 1400 United Ways across the country and many of those organizations are also receiving support from the AmeriCorps program, so this is a really wonderful partnership.

Specifically, I would like to comment on two of the issues in front -- before you today, the perfor- -- the performance measures and evaluation component, (c)(3) -- I was going to blend them, but I think I'll do three separate thoughts. So performance measures and evaluation, federal shares, sustainability.

Specifically with regard to performance measures and evaluation, we are of the opinion in the United Way movement that we need to think differently about how we measure accountability and how we are informing the public about the stewardship of the public dollars. My tax dollars -- dollars contributed to local United Ways -- must be well managed, well coordinated and effectively evaluated to ensure, now more than ever in the time of precious dollars, that those dollars are being well spent. Local United Ways are currently going through a transformation away from an evaluation based upon the size of your campaign toward an evaluation based upon community impact. And I suspect that as you think about how to transform the performance measures and evaluation of AmeriCorps, you're going to find it's a daunting task because it's a huge national program. I think that there are models within the United Way's system that would be of interest to you in terms of how you communicate these evaluative models to a large diverse, varied, locally driven system, and I encourage you to create a dialogue with United Way of America and other state United Way associations around the country and commissions also doing the same around the country because I think there are a lot of interesting parallels to be made there.

Secondly, with regard to federal share. Texas is blessed with an incredibly diverse philanthropic community. We have foundations here in the metroplex and across the state. We're one of the most foundation rich communities and states in the country. Our United Ways are huge. Texans are very generous. We have numerous corporate donors such as Texas Instruments headquartered here. Today, we're talking about their generosity to the United Way movement as well as the faith community is very generous in Texas as well. However, there are limits to those dollars. I'm not speaking for our partners in philanthropy, but I do think it is important to recognize particularly in the time of profound budget cuts at the local and state levels and a -- and a looming federal deficit, that we're all concerned about, we need to be aware of the limits on local philanthropy in terms of the private sector to meet more and more responsibility of paying for AmeriCorps programs. And we are here to help. We want to help. We will do everything within our power to be of assistance; however, there are limits to the assistance that we can provide, and I think it's important that we -- we recognize those limits.

Finally, with regard to sustainability, a boss of mine used to say that all wisdom begins at the business end of the shovel, not the handle. States are the business end of the shovel. Local communities are the business end of the shovel.

If you think about a place like Texas, it's an incredibly, wonderfully diverse state and our local United Ways represent that diversity. It's what makes it strong. It's what makes it such a fantastic place to live. And because of that diversity, it is incredibly important in our mind that states maintain control of how programs are funded and administered in

order to assure the maximum utilization of local, state, and federal dollars as well as the private dollars that are coming into the system.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to comment and we applaud you on your advanced input procedure.

MS. VAN DER VEER: Thank you, Jason.

Okay. Sylvia.

MS. ELLIOTT: Wendy.

MS. VAN DER VEER: Wendy. I'm sorry.

MS. ELLIOTT: Hi. My name is Wendy Elliot, and I am with the Volunteer Corps of America, and we're located in Shawnee Mission, Kansas, which is in the greater Kansas City area. And we previously were a non-profit, but -- but unfortunately, we were not funded last year. We are very lucky that we didn't lose any affiliates. We have all our affiliates. We did have a sustainability plan in place for something like that. But previously, I was an AmeriCorps member in the state of Texas in a program in Lubbock. I was later on the program director at that same site, so I definitely sort of know what I'm about to speak to you. I'm going to speak of real communities and sustainability issues.

Two of the communities that I worked with in the state of -- in the state of Texas outside of the City of Lubbock have actually been designated by the Census Bureau as being poverty stricken, which you might not think that's a -- that's a big deal, but I'm going to touch on it in a second why this -- this is a factor that the Corporation definitely needs to look at. Like I said, I've seen firsthand the plight of the rural communities. 21 percent of the population in our nation lives in rural areas. This number is always declining. When you think of rural areas, do you often get a Norman Rockwell feel to what rural areas are, but I was really surprised. I noticed from working as an AmeriCorps member in rural communities and also being at the national direct level and seeing our rural areas that we work with in Oklahoma, Washington state, actually Oregon, that rural communities aren't always the Norman Rockwell. Actually, they have -- their -- the higher -- there's higher drugs rates, higher alcohol use rates, higher nicotine use rates among teenagers in the rural areas. Also, they found out that students in rural areas are a lot less likely to go to college than their urban and suburban counterparts. And the reason I'm talking of this is because AmeriCorps members in these rural communities often make excellent mentors for rural youth. They also -- the educational awards alone provide rural youth with an opportunity to attend college they might not typically have, and I definitely saw that when I was working in Lubbock. I had a lot of first-generation Americans that worked in our program that typically could not afford to go to college, or if they did go to college, they would have to take out enormous loans that they would be paying off the rest of their lives. And it really spurred their -- their interest, you know, in going to college by oh, my gosh, I've got this educational award I can use. I'm definitely going to go, and with having as many universities as Texas has, they definitely have their choice of where they -- where they wanted to go.

One of the things that we're really concerned about at the national direct level -- and I know even if I was a state program director, this would concern me as well is the level

of match. Increasing the member cost level of match will be detrimental to a lot of programs. A lot of programs -- yes, they can -- they can make match by, you know, having AmeriCorps members serve at different community agencies and those community agencies paying something back. But in a lot of rural communities, there are no other community agencies. They're it. There's one community agency and that's the one that has AmeriCorps members and that's the ones that are going out and building houses or adopting families for Christmas. If you up this, it will be almost impossible for a lot of rural communities to meet that match.

Now, operating cost match is a little bit easier to -- to meet because a lot times communities aim high, such as salaries. In rural programs, you won't have as difficult -- at least in our eyes, the rural programs that we currently work with, they will have a difficult problem reaching that. One of the other things that we're -- that we're concerned about is making sure that there's no time limits on programs. On -- okay, you've had a program now for four years. Okay. You're going away or you've had a program for six years and you're going away. And the reason I'm saying that is just like everyone -- everybody else has said, you just start going after three years, and these rural programs, it's going to take a while to get the community to get behind them and to trust them. And yeah, we -- we do believe that, you know, as the number of your outputs increase -- let's say youth volunteers. As the number of youth volunteers increase, increase, increase, yes, the number of AmeriCorps members should increase for that particular site. Once they reach efficiency, that number should decrease. That number should gradually decrease and allow the site to possibly place those AmeriCorps members in another site, but give the site and the state -- I'm sorry -- give the national directors and the state commission that option to put them somewhere else. Don't tell them okay, you've had them for six years, you're out.

In closing, I would just like to say thank you so much for listening to us because we do realize change is going to happen, and this really does mean a lot, especially to a program like ours who wasn't funded last year and that you're still listening to us. That really does mean a lot.

MS. VAN DER VEER: Wendy, thank you.

Thank you to all panelists, and now David, Rosie, Donna, questions?

MS. WILLIAMS: I have one question for Julie. Actually, I have two questions. One for Julie and one for Susan.

Julie, you mentioned that you had 1700 volunteers or 1700 organizations that you work with. I heard the number 1700 and started writing and missed what it was, but you also spoke about efficiencies. How is it -- can you give me an example of an efficiency -- of an efficiency and also can you give me an example of how you share it across -- across all 1700, and I -- I only want one specific, but I'd like, if you would, share with me after the meeting or maybe we can get it on record several more that I'm really interested in finding out about.

MS. THOMAS: Yes. We -- we have 1700 organizations. That's what I was trying to say. And a good example of an efficiency that was brought about as a result of combining these three centers would deal with a very simple thing like payroll or your audit. We collapsed separate 501(c)(3)'s so we now have one 501(c)(3), and they are all considered programs -- each center is considered a program of the larger center,

although each center still has its own advisory board, its own separate budget and so forth, so you've got one audit, one set of payroll, one set of bylaws, one set of personnel policies in just -- just in respect to administration of an office. And then, you know, I'll - I'll visit later with you about the media implications, which are just astronomical.

MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

Susan, how are we at the local level attracting folks to take advantage of the faith-based initiatives? What exactly are we doing here in Texas to -- to educate, recruit, and get people very active and engaged in that?

MS. WEDDINGTON: Well, with One Star, we are -- we have just -- we're less than three months in with the office of faith-based and community initiatives and what we're looking at is getting the capital compassion vote to see if we can get grants for capacity building. Many of the agencies in Texas that have grants are -- to varying degrees have developed specialized materials for them and have proactively gone out and tried to get information into the faith-based community; however, there is no coordination across the agencies. And that is, I think, a role that we need to look into. We are the state's entity to promote and support volunteerism, and so that will -- that is one place we're looking internally into making it more user accessible to what's going on in all the agencies, what's available, and also being the point -- which is what the Governor charges to do -- sort of the point of entry for those institutions -- faith-based and community institutions to be connected where they need to be connected in order that they can have an opportunity to participate, so it's -- you know, it's new for us, but the commitment is there and I'm going to add that there's only ten states in -- in the nation that actually have a separate office of faith-based and community initiatives at this time, so it's a real opportunity for us.

MS. WILLIAMS: All right. Thank you.

MR. EISNER: Susan, you suggested that we might move forward with a set of goals and waivers. First of all, I want to clarify. Did you mean goals and waivers for the commissions or for the individual grantees?

MS. WEDDINGTON: Well, I don't -- I don't know how that works. I would say probably for the commissions because -- you know, I -- I looked at a lot of things. I've heard a lot of things and establishing our own policies is good, but then again, what is the benchmark? We talked about the benchmark. There's got to be something because I mean, I do understand there's got to be something, and that that's what Congress wants and that's where we are, and I -- and I don't think it's bad. I don't think it's bad to set some goals because if you don't set something to work toward, you -- you sort of don't always rise to the highest standards. You -- you just go to where it's easier. However, that's why I suggested, perhaps, a waiver that -- that's got to -- you've got to make the case for extending. There are cases, I think, to be made so -- and I think so the state commissions should work within the framework of what the Corporation sets as what would be, you know, ideal sort of goals as you define how this program should be used and a clear procedure of us being able to go through a waiver process where we can justify a need for an extension or a change to -- to the -- to the goals.

MR. EISNER: If the goal was in terms of matching requirements, do you think it makes more sense for a -- if we were focused on matching, would you rather us see it -- do it on a portfolio basis or on an individual grantee basis, so one way would say, you know,

to the Commission that on average your three-year programs need to be matching at this level, your six-year programs need to be matching at this level, your nine-year programs need to matching at this level, or the other way to do it would be to say each three-year program should be at this level, each nine-year program should be at the level, and so forth. Do you have...

MS. WEDDINGTON: Well, one thing I saw immediately was -- was that with the way the programs are structured in AmeriCorps that our goal should instantly be sort of incubating -- a way to incubate some new programs, bring them up to a level of maturity and then really get them prepared to enter into the competitive pool. So I don't know what the philosophy will be in the competitive, so where do we want to bring them up to to get them -- move them into the next tier so that we can keep moving them up. So I think it would be -- those would be tied together as far as if competitive is going to start at a lower match, then we would need to bring our programs up to be prepared to be in at that level. And so I -- I -- I think that that needs to be seen as a, you know, cumulative whole and attaining some goals to use that.

MR. EISNER: Thank you.

Wendy, you -- you spoke about -- both about the challenges of putting time limits on --

MS. ELLIOTT: Uh-huh.

MR. EISNER: -- and you also -- and I think a lot of your key arguments there were around how programs become more effective and efficient over time, but then you also spoke about not wanting to change matching formulas.

MS. ELLIOTT: Yeah.

MR. EISNER: My question gets to: Is -- do you see a little inconsistency there -

MS. ELLIOTT: Actually -- well, but -- but the problem is I'm not saying not to change them. I'm just saying please be mindful when you're looking at the role of communities -- I mean, when you're looking at changing the matching for rural areas because if you change the matching and you make it too expen- -- too high for them, there's no way because -- I mean, in the urban settings, we're already having problems finding funds.

MR. EISNER: Thank -- thank you. That's -- that's helpful.

Let me -- let me just ask the next question.

MS. ELLIOTT: Okay.

MR. EISNER: Do you -- if I'm hearing you now right, you're saying there is at some level an appreciation that as a program moves from new to more mature --

MS. ELLIOTT: Uh-huh.

MR. EISNER: -- finally to stable, that there -- both because of efficiency and because of the depth of the relationship with the community, that you think that the capacity for matching should -- does grow over time.

MS. ELLIOTT: Exactly.

MR. EISNER: You probably have to be careful.

MS. ELLIOTT: Exactly, because just like yesterday, I was seeing our site in small-town Oklahoma, and there is no way in the beginning of that program they would have been able to make the matching requirements. They don't have AmeriCorps members currently, but right now, they've been around eleven years. They have a great established relationship with the community, and it would be a lot easier to go to those few organizations that are in the community and say hey, can we have a little bit of money than -- and also something I -- when you were saying that, it made me think of it. When I was saying, you know, when it reaches efficiency and it should -- and it should start -- the members -- the members should start dropping off, I think that ties into the match because eventually the community should be supported -- should be supporting the program.

MR. EISNER: Thank you very much.

MS. VAN DER VEER: Okay. Thank you to this panel.

And that now concludes the preselected speakers. So this next panel coming up, which is Rick Cavender, Sylvia Reyna, Alissa Magrum, and Mary Ellen Isaacs, and speaking in that order, please -- this group has four minutes.

I need Lauren Kielsmeier, Bruce Bailey, J.J. Harris, and Kim Grant to be on deck, please. Lauren Kielsmeier, Bruce Bailey, J.J. Harris and Kim Grant, if you'd please come up to the front row.

So we'll go ahead and start with Rick.

MR. CAVENDER: Hi, there. My name is Rick Cavender. I'm a businessman from San Antonio with Cavender Auto Family, president of Saturn of San Antonio, and I'm a very proud member -- a board member of the Board of Champions for City Year San Antonio and a proud member of AmeriCorps, and I want to thank you all very much for allowing me to be here as a businessman, on a busy agenda, but something very dear to my heart, very important to my heart to be here with you-all today because I'm here representing many volunteers of Champions of Community and National Service. I decided to make the trip today so that I could join Stella Guerra Nelson, our executive director here in our audience and Ms. Sylvia Reyna, assistant superintendent of the San Antonio Independent School District, and it's a critical time for the future of City Year. Many on our Board of Champions and thousands who have supported us locally await anxiously for favorable consideration. They share the hope that we submit to you today in a request that City Year be sustained under this unique public, private partnership upon which AmeriCorps was built and founded.

I was first introduced to City Year at a Rotary luncheon about ten years ago. A Dr. Maria Ferrier -- some of you may remember and recall and know -- then the executive director. She stood proudly at all four feet, eleven inches with her eyes poking over the podium with her proud AmeriCorps bodyguards at her side, her City Year bodyguards, and she spoke passionately as they stood at an at-ease attention. She spoke of volunteerism, national service, the history of AmeriCorps and the Peace Corps. The

third largest Rotary Club in -- in the world heard the -- the message. She painted a picture of a more perfect world, one which not only welcomed national service but demanded it. That young people between the ages of 17 and 24 should be required or at least strongly encouraged to volunteer a year of their life to community service. It rang a bell in me, and from that podium, I became involved in City Year. I led my Saturn of San Antonio employees to a day of service on a -- on a school campus with City Year corps members. We worked side by side. We learned from each other. We landscaped the -- the school that day, and then I joined the board. Our board champion at that time, Kathy Sosa, I recall, gave us a concern. She said, you know, when we finish Boys and Girls Scout membership, there's not a lot for kids and young people to step into, so to step into -- because City Year has a great fit and -- talking about fulfilling self-esteem and goodness when inner-city school children meet their -- their mentors and their City Year corps members. They're -- they're helped to read, they're - they're taught math. They create lasting friendships and become role models. And that's what the City Year corps is doing today in the San Antonio Independent School District schools.

In 1997, I was president of the largest Rotary Club in the world. It was then -- went from No. 3 to 1, and we decided to form a partnership with City Year, and I -- and I put the membership behind that cause. We began a program called Kingdom for Kids where we went on to San Antonio Independent School District campuses. We felt the need to look at facilities and we built playgrounds, and we've built five playgrounds. We have completed the fifth just recently with City Year corps members at our side. We're the funding source. We raise up to \$70,000 per play structure and we go in there on a two-day program and we build playgrounds with City Year and with families and encourage the support.

So as a businessman, I'm always interested in the question of how to get a better return on the investment. I'm led by the example of Jeff Swartz, CEO of Timberland Corporation, a proud supporter of City Year, who once said before a company can do well, it must do good. I believe those words. I also believe that we could phrase this to young people for the opportunity. Before a young person can do well, he or she must do good. City Year allows these young people the opportunity to do good. I ask the Corporation for National and Community Service to consider a way to get a better return on your investment. Consider how to best leverage the investment you make in AmeriCorps programs. Sustain funding for City Year, make it consistent -- consistent and predictable so that we can partner the effort with private sector support, allow us the peace of mind that City Year can be sustained with public, private partnership.

Thank you for allowing me to provide this appeal and commentary.

MS. VAN DER VEER: Thank you, Rick.

Sylvia, go ahead.

MS. REYNA: Good afternoon. I'm Sylvia Reyna. I'm the assistant superintendent for governmental relations and internal affairs for the San Antonio Independent School District and thank you very much for the opportunity to be here this afternoon. I think today I want to comment on several key issues being addressed by rulemaking and have there -- that have a potential to have significant impact on our school district and districts across this entire state and nation. I want to give you, by way of background, my first introduction to City Year of San Antonio is that I worked as a principal of Brewer

Elementary School located in the heart of urban San Antonio. 99 percent low socioeconomic area, eight known operating gangs, the second highest crime rate area in the city of San Antonio, and we had also one of the lowest performing academic standards in the entire City of San Antonio across the state. I was placed there, but I certainly knew that I couldn't do it by myself, and I needed the partners around the city to do that.

City Year was placed on my campus, and with the partners assigned to our campus, we were able to raise illiteracy rates and then make the school an acceptably performing school. Today, very proudly, it is a recognized campus in the state of Texas. The impact that those students had or these -- or those corps members had on the literacy rate of students is significant. I was able to leverage partnership with the local university. I was able to leverage partnership with other businesses and ensure that the students receive adequate literacy and mentoring opportunities at the school.

I have since moved away from the principalship and are now currently serving as an assistant superintendent, but I've connected myself with the City Corps -- City Year organization in that I want to make sure that the school district and other schools within the school district have the opportunity to benefit from the service of the organization. We have, as a school district, committed financial resources and have become a service partner as an entire district and last year provided \$50,000 in funding to our local organization and this year a \$40,000 award to the City Year organization.

It's important that we continue to do that because City Year has had that substan- -- substantial impact in our classrooms and on the children we serve. Very recently, we spoke to a principal also at a school very much with the same kind of demographics as the one that I served in, and last year was ranked 63rd amongst our elementary schools and had the lowest attendance rate in our school district. Currently, because we do have City Year members working there, it is now 18th in our school district. They have had an impact, and it is profound. And as Mr. Cavender mentioned, the kind of relationship that we have had has also built those playgrounds on our campuses and infused a tremendous amount of funds to those local campuses and to the community at large because those playgrounds are Kingdoms for Kids and Kingdoms for the Community.

Although, we've been a very proud sponsor and support City Year wholeheartedly as a partner in our school system, we also face very -- very difficult financial times as a school system. I don't have to tell anyone who's a person within the state of Texas that right now public school systems are faced with dire constraints in our financial world. So what we need to do is look at those kinds of organizations that will help us sustain that federal support and what we're asking for to ensure that AmeriCorps programs, like City Year of San Antonio, with these valuable resources are not put in jeopardy because we - - they have to depend on service partners, such as ourselves who are also under financial constraints.

I recommend that the Corporation for National and Community Service avoids setting time limits on how long AmeriCorps programs can receive federal funding and instead focus on ensuring that the return on your investment is as high as possible by fostering in competitive grant environments for AmeriCorps programs. From my perspective, this means evaluating success on a number of factors, including the program service impact, the quality and sustainability of the community partnerships, and the ability of a program to leverage outside partners.

I would thank you very much for the opportunity to comment on this process and -- and for the opportunity to give our opinion. We can bring in school districts to help in any way that we can. We do need that predictability. Again, thank you so much.

MS. VAN DER VEER: Sylvia, thank you very much.

Okay. Alissa, you're next.

MS. MAGRUM: Thank you for the opportunity to speak. My name is Alissa Magrum. I'm the director of the Community Schools of Central Texas AmeriCorps program and a proud AmeriCorps alum as well. I'm currently using my AmeriCorps education award to pursue a master's in organizational leadership and ethics, so we are creating that -- keeping our members involved in the community and building capacity further in this -- in this field.

I want to share a little bit about our particular AmeriCorps program. Our mission is to keep kids in school. Our members work alongside professional social workers and community volunteers to provide a structured, one-to-one tutoring and mentoring services during and after the school day, and that's a minimum of one hour per week for the duration of the school year. So we want to work in-depth with our kids.

Since 2001, 188 members have tutored and mentored 2,335 students and have involved over a thousand young people in service programs -- projects in the community. One of the most powerful predictors for dropping out of school is academic failure. Specifically, in the core subjects of reading, math, and language arts. Our program evaluation shows that students who would not have passed are now passing their classes thanks to AmeriCorps members' assistance. We have strong, long-standing partnerships in our local school districts, even they can see the impact our members make.

Right now, classrooms are crowded and schools are overwhelmed with testing and state standards. Teachers have to focus on the entire class. Our AmeriCorps members can give individual, structured attention to students who are struggling in the classroom, and often that individual attention to that one child, may make a difference in them succeeding in school.

While there's so many things I want to address, some of the things that have been brought up, I'll use the rest of my time to address sustainability, the grant awards cycle, and term limits. Please consider a broad definition of sustainability beyond physical sustainability. Because as members turn over each year, programs need continued core funding to ensure stability in our programs. Impoverished communities often experience short-lived initiatives that fade away after the grant period of funding is over. All the AmeriCorps programs I know are constantly working to build community support, which resulted in additional resources and stronger capacity.

As that capacity grows, we're able to meet more of our community's needs. Reducing funding would divert attention from building strong programs and providing more services. And as a number of people have spoken, shrinking funds in public and private sector makes the reality of independence from federal funds unrealistic for most AmeriCorps programs. Again, the needs are increasing while the funds and resources are decreasing.

If this trend continues, we will leave so many of our children and our families behind. For the grant cycle, AmeriCorps programs that operate in public schools, the grant cycle should follow the academic year. Members begin service in September, they need to use spring and summer to recruit. September start date, we need to know at least six months in advance what our funding is going to be and have pre-award costs be allowable. Three-year grant awards without a yearly continuation process, let our progress reports and our site visits and our program evaluations speak to -- to this. Don't make us go through an applica- -- application process every year. This saves administrative costs.

No term limits. These dollars that are invested to train and build capacity in AmeriCorps programs. If -- if they just take them away, you've wasted those dollars because the program may be gone. In Texas, really briefly, we're currently undergoing a three-year accreditation process. This process will be a motivating factor for programs to work to being efficient and effective. AmeriCorps programs should have strong evaluation plans and should put money in their budgets for those plans. These programs should not go unfunded. They should be rewarded. That was fast.

One real quick thing would be I second the -- or second or third when people are saying that there should be a set aside for new programs. A small percent should be set aside so we can have new programs. I guess that's it. Thank you.

MS. VAN DER VEER: Thank you, Alissa.

Mary Ellen, go ahead.

MS. ISAACS: I'm Mary Ellen Isaacs. I'm the program director for AmeriCorps Community Engagement and Education at UT Austin. We are literacy intervention. We are currently a national competitive. We were thrilled to be funded at a competitive level last year. We are operating at reduced numbers, however, still, even though we're at a competitive level. And I want to just briefly say I contribute our success this year to three things, phenomenal support from our state foundation, a really collaborative spirit in Texas programs, and the strong partnerships. I can speak in Austin to similar kinds of partnerships to what San Antonio spoke to. We serve about 500 kids with a research-based early literacy initiative from Pre-K through 3rd. We have a 25 -- currently 25 full-time members. We have 20 UT students working in our program as non-AmeriCorps members and we've leveraged about 200 community volunteers this year.

What -- I want to kind of shift gears a little bit and speak to something that is near and dear to my heart, which is the literacy tutoring qualifications. I'm first a very proud and passionate AmeriCorps program director, but I'm also a very proud and passionate public school teacher and reading specialist since 1979, and so I want to speak to some of those things. There are two -- two issues that I see developing in -- in -- that I want to speak to. One is I applaud and support the desire to raise the bar on the quality of tutoring, to make an alliance on current research. I'm very familiar with the national panel of No Child Left Behind. I also see and applaud the desires to bring more community members into service alongside AmeriCorps members. Frequently, people use tutoring as an example of that, and I kind of see a potential collision course there, and I just wanted to speak to that briefly. I -- I think it's really critical that we match the tasks that we ask our members and community volunteers to do with the level of support, training, and supervision they're going to get from the schools.

As a former classroom teacher, I care deeply about not pulling children away from instruction and equality, so that I -- I kind of want to offer an analogy, a swimming pool. You think of the shallow end to the deep end. In the shallow water, you don't necessarily need as much lifeguarding or need as much training to play in that water. There are very real tasks that tutors can do and that community members can do that are instructionally powerful with limited amount of training, but the No Child Left Behind guidelines are deep-water tasks, and in the deep water, you need a lifeguard. You need someone to -- you need more training on how to swim in those waters. How do you effectively help children, how do you read the cues from children that are struggling readers, and so at that deeper end, you need more support, more training, more ongoing supervision. So I just ask, as those guidelines are being developed, that on one side sits all if not the design, but that there be consideration given to that shallow to deep water, if you -- if you will. I think that -- let's see. I've got so many ideas here. I'm just -- I'm aware of that light.

The -- the -- okay. Yeah, I just -- I -- I just really feel that as we look towards involving community members and as we look to raising the bar, that we not only look at the recent research in reading that's very clear in the national panel and in No Child Left Behind, but that we also look to the research that's there as well about effective use of volunteer tutors in literacy with attention to that continuum of support because I -- I -- there are very important tasks that can happen at every level of that continuum that we can help members and community volunteers, too. Thank you.

MS. VAN DER VEER: Thank you, Mary Ellen.

Okay. Questions from the panel.

MR. EISNER: I do have a couple.

Rick, thank you, first of all, for your support and for the business community's support of -- of City Year. I also come from a business background and the idea that -- several things you said made me feel like putting a dealmaker hat on. I'll try to avoid that, and yet -- you -- you talked about how you-all are focusing on increasing leverage. As you can imagine, we're also focused a lot on -- on increasing leverage. To some extent, each of us is leveraging the other, if you can figure that out right. Your appeal to us is for more consistency, predictability, and continued support for City Year, and I guess the -- the essence of my question to you is without speaking on behalf of City Year, which I know you're not able to -- to do, would you -- would you say that -- I mean, for the national organization -- would you say that it feels rational to say that in exchange for or if on -- on the one hand, there's a way to provide that level of consistency and predictability of support that -- on the other hand, that would come with some higher requirements for your community -- the business community to step up to the support on the match within -- and -- within the community?

MR. CAVENDER: Very definitely. As -- as we see it, the private sector support -- we feel it's got a good balance in public sector support in this unique partnership. That is, it really is a unique non-profit as we look at it from the business sense that we do have some public support, but the levels have been going inconsistently up and down and the -- and the balance is missing. So the message that we're sending, not only to our board but to our community, is to support City Year. A lot of our communities walking up to me in the halls and saying what's going to happen to City Year now that we've heard they've lost their funding, you know, and so that message was true a year ago. And

then the following year, we catch funding from AmeriCorps, but we're not sure what's going to come into City Year to -- to -- you know, to where the balance will be recreated. So all I'm really asking is that we create a balance, and I can tell you that there's enough inspiration in our community, more than just building playgrounds, but with what City Year is involved in. A lot of media representation, a lot of media support for -- for national service in City Year that we could rally and we could do a really fine job of creating a good balance. But it's something that we could create. We need to bring it back to the size it was. For instance, now it's half the size it was a year ago. We're just trying to find those dollars to help us achieve that.

MR. EISNER: Thank you.

Sylvia, a similar question. I want to make sure that I -- I understood your statement as well. You -- you noted two of the measurements that you suggested that we use to determine sustainability are the quality of sustainability in partnerships and the ability to leverage outside partners. And I want -- the implication there would be that a higher match, you'd -- the quality of sustainability in partnerships and leveraging more outside partners is a decent measure of sustainability. I just want to make sure I heard that right.

MS. REYNA: I think you did hear that right. I do think that when you look at the quality of the service partnerships that exist and the quality of the programs, you're going to have that willingness on the part of a school district -- or public school district that is -- that is already having to weigh very heavily how we spend our money and what kind of outcomes we invest in -- or what kind of programs we invest in so that our outcomes -- we're getting the maximum return on our investment, so you're looking at making sure that you have quality partnerships and making sure that there is the -- the -- the measurements are in place that will make sure that we can justify the kind of relationship that we have in this kind of partnership. Because unfortunately, in a school district's budget, the largest amount of money is going to go towards our salaries. The next kinds of things that are going to be looking at are going to be projects, and unfortunately, when you look at the instructional programs versus service projects, there is sometime -- some -- in some people's minds, there isn't a link. What we want to do is also bring that link so that the quality of the partnership shares -- so that when we have this kind of -- of partnership, that we, in fact, are going to get the kind of literacy link and the impact on our academic performance, which is our goal is to increase academic performance. This organization has done that for us in the kinds of programs that we have. Does that mean that we have to -- that -- that increasing a match or whatever? I guess to answer the question is that I don't know the particulars of the -- of -- of the rules that exist right now. I just know that from a school district's perspective, it has to be a quality program in order for us to invest it in the future.

MR. EISNER: Thank you.

Mary Ellen, I really appreciated the metaphor of the swimming pool, the shallow and deep end. And we'd be very interested -- I don't know if you can do it now or -- or in follow-up with any existing criteria you can cite that sort of lays out the kinds of things that happen in the deep end versus the shallow end. I don't think whatever roles that we do that we're going to want to try to create a new empirical set of activities.

MS. ISAACS: Right.

MR. EISNER: We'd rather rely on some existing structure that sort of lays them out that way. So if you could point us to what you think are smart publications or people that have done that job of laying out what happens in the deep end versus the shallow end, I think that would help us.

MS. ISAACS: Yeah. I'd -- I'd be happy to speak with you about that. I -- there are some things out there. There are -- there are some, I think, beginning attempts at that. I think it's a direction that we should go in thinking through how we best use tutors, so I'd be happy to tell you know what I know about it.

There's a lot of research -- Barbara Wasik is her name at Johns Hopkins who has done a lot of research on the effectiveness of volunteer tutors in schools, and she lays out -- I think it's about eight different criteria. I think tutoring is a big umbrella, and so -- you know, I don't know if you'd call it a tutor if someone comes in and just reads to the kids. Well, that's really instruction because we know that some kids come to school with two or three hours of sitting in a lap, reading books, and some kids come to school with over 3,000 hours, and so reading to children is instructionally powerful. In a very brief one-time training limited follow-up, you can significantly strengthen that so that it meets No Child Left Behind guidelines about comprehension, for example, but in terms of deep water, I mean a lesson plan, research-based that tutors are following that organizes all those five principles of No Child Left Behind in one setting. That's -- you know, our -- that's what our tutors do, but we have on-site staff who are literacy experts meeting every week with them and that's something school districts don't have staff to do, and so that's more expensive. But you know, we have to look at -- all of that can be helpful. There's -- there's enough work for all of us.

MR. EISNER: Thank you.

MS. MAUK: I have nothing to ask.

MS. VAN DER VEER: Okay. Thank you, Rick, Sylvia, Alissa, and Mary Ellen.

And can I have Lauren, Bruce, J.J., and Kim up to the table? And then on deck, Nancy Sharrock, Melinda Points, A.J. Hills, and Carla Weir.

Okay. Lauren, four minutes.

MS. KIELSMEIER: Thank you. I'm here to discuss three vantage points from which I have firsthand experience, that of an AmeriCorps member and AmeriCorps program director and now as a state commission executive director. From these vantage points, I've gained an appreciation for some of the issues we are facing today as we grapple with the past, present, and future of national services.

I'll start with my experience as an AmeriCorps member. It was 1993 in the summer of service, the pilot program for AmeriCorps. I was working at the East Bay Conservation Corps in Oakland, California and was assigned to a junior high school there. My colleagues and I spent the summer developing and carrying out service learning projects with middle school students. It was this thoughtful, meaningful programming that gave me a sense that I was making -- I was making a difference in the lives of Oakland youth, so much so that I stayed with the EBCC for four more years. I was hooked, and I remained committed to the program and the community because I felt needed and

because I felt that I had a duty to contribute. To me, this is sustainability, but it's hard to measure this in dollar terms. It's a sustainability of human capital we invest in as individuals. We want AmeriCorps members to get a taste of the facts that they are necessary members of society. AmeriCorps allowed myself and people like me to serve the community as the Peace Corps does, as the military does, and to service the community and service the country.

Now going to my second vantage point, that of an AmeriCorps program director, so after some time away from national service, I returned to EBCC to run their AmeriCorps program. From this point of view, I gained a bigger sense -- gained a sense of the bigger picture and what impact that the agency has on larger open communities. I saw how AmeriCorps funding enabled an organization to build a capacity, to reach thousands of students within Oakland public schools. Then after nine years of AmeriCorps funding, EBCC was one of the agencies last year that dismantled its program of over 100 members and 15 staff. Its nine years of service to Oakland students had ceased and with it went nine years of institutional knowledge, history, and experience. This situation truly illustrates, to me, the lack of sustainability within these programs, but should that be their goal. We are talking about in these cases poor communities, both urban and rural. And I do not believe that these kinds of communities can provide increasing levels of matching funding. Sure, communities should be asked to leverage federal resources with other contributions, but to the goal of sustainability, where a program survives in the absence of federal funding, I just don't think this will happen.

Finally, I speak to you from the point of view as the Arizona State Commission. Now, I'm relatively new to this role, but from my short tenure, I feel like I can look at national service from an even broader perspective at the state level. Each state is so different in terms of its needs. Arizona is one that has several urban centers but is largely rural. Imagine what this means for a state commission who wishes to be inclusive of programs in the cities but also those -- those in small towns and on native American reservations.

Rural and travel communities often lack resources -- access to resources that we take for granted in big cities. The Arizona Commission has historically taken an active and thoughtful role in addressing some of its state's specific needs. For example, a couple of years ago, we looked at the underrepresentation of rural programs in our state formula portfolio. Out of those examinations came a recommendation of policy whereby we set aside formula funds for rural programs. This approach was highly successful. In that formula, programs were funded and one of these, Guadalupe, was a competitive program in 2003-2004.

My point here is that state commissions are incredibly smart, and there are states who truly care about our programs. We have ideas and solutions. We have a stake in the outcomes of the -- a stake in the outcomes of our work, so use us.

In closing, thank you for this dialogue and making this possible.

MS. VAN DER VEER: All right. Thank you, Lauren.

Okay. Bruce, you're next.

MR. BAILEY: My name's Bruce Bailey, and I'm the executive director of AmeriCorps St. Louis. AmeriCorps St. Louis consisted of two AmeriCorps programs, our education and our safety service corps, which are the only two programs left in the state of Missouri

that began their service during the first AmeriCorps year. We've engaged almost 700 members between both programs and the service who have contributed at least a million to \$250,000 of service to our community, and the majority of these dollars have been focused on early learners and helping them to become academically successful, helping them learn how to read, and just as a benchmark, it's important to note that only 23 percent of our 3rd and 4th graders in the St. Louis public schools are reading at grade level. 90 percent of those kids come from families who live in poverty.

Beyond those hours spent on the schools, our emergency team that's based in St. Louis has traveled to 29 of the country's 50 states helping communities in crisis deal with the aftermath of disasters, including responded to the bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City.

We have continuously leveraged federal dollars investment to generate over a half million local dollars annually. Our local cash match contribution has consistently exceeded 50 percent of the federal commitment. Less than 6 percent of our gov- -- our local resource comes from in-kind contributions; however, let me be emphatic about this. Despite our substantial success in generating local match, given the state, local, and economic conditions, it's unrealistic to expect that our program could survive with any quality in force to continuously transfer significant, additional financial responsibility of local resources. In essence, our program would cease to exist. Our state is looking at a \$1 billion budget deficit next year. The school district that we work in has a \$62 million deficit this year, and the city of St. Louis has a \$34 million deficit this year.

When we consider the issue of sustainability, what is para- -- a paramount concern is the sustained impact in meeting local needs on an ongoing basis. If the devolution of federal support in a long-standing AmeriCorps program, such as ours, is inevitable, then it is imperative that the alternative service delivery mechanisms that would supplant AmeriCorps services be tested, proven, and ground into reality. I'm not aware of the body of evidence that demonstrates the comparable -- the comparable impact and episodic volunteer service achieving the same level of sustained impact on AmeriCorps service as documented through systematically monitored performance measurement.

Furthermore, I'm not aware of the examples of large AmeriCorps programs that have been successfully transferred to localities that are operating at a self-sustained, stable mode in achieving the same outcomes that were previously accomplished through full-time AmeriCorps service. If a cost containment structure is going to be implemented by the Corporation with stipulated -- some mandated decline in federal support, then these expectations should be applied evenly across all elements of the AmeriCorps program. State and competitive programs should not be held to a different expectation than other national components within AmeriCorps, including the N triple C, which should be required to begin to develop a commensory private sector investment to offset their field operating costs.

We fully support the Corporation's model of performance measures; however, we feel that this is only one element of establishing and understanding a program's true community value, quality of partnerships, level of local cash investments, board member retention and recruitment, and level of need can almost be factored into an evaluation matrix to fully understand supportive decision-making about continuing federal funding.

And lastly, just quickly, I would say for programs with a long-standing record of achievement, substantial cash participation and strong partnerships, programs that have

shared their gifts with others through staff training, developing and sharing of best practices, the Corporation should consider the concept of legacy or heritage programs that can serve as anchors to coach new programs on the road to success. These programs should receive special consideration for extended funding mechanisms under the new rulemaking provisions. Thank you very much for your time.

MS. VAN DER VEER: Thank you, Bruce.

Okay. J.J., you're ready to go next.

MR. HARRIS: Thank you.

I must tell you I've been in Week 22 of a bout of hiccups, so if I have a problem, I will discontinue my comments.

My name is J.J. Harris, and I'm the chair of the Missouri Community Service Commission. Today, I want to talk about local participation. I think limiting the number that a program or project is funded does not take consideration. The unique environmental aspects with each program are a part of that. Environmental issues such as population growth are declining, changing the needs of its citizens. The loss of assets or governmental relations or changes, limited funding, et cetera, all affect the programs and projects that exist in a given -- given environment. Communities also vary in available resources, both financial and technical assistance. Local commissions should be aware of the environment and their program assistance. Therefore, the burden to determine the need to grant for the local commission will be subject to approval by the Corporation. A needs announcement should be demonstrated to the community's needs for a program or a project. The burden of demonstrating needs should be the responsibility of the selected administration. Statistical data should be utilized to support the administration. It should be the responsibility of the local commission to determine the level of need to justify federal funding. Criteria developed by local commissions will be subject to approval by the Corporation. Capacity of the programs will go to the administration that oversee programs of federal funding where capacity is absent and needs are present. Local commissions should assist programs in capacity building and leadership development for the purpose of future applications. Federal funding may be a consideration for financial assistance. Assessment, planning, goal-setting prioritization and the development of benchmarks is viable for achieving or showing the success of any program. It should improve -- incorporate this into the application process. The informative process should be submitted to the Corporation for approval prior to implementation. Data collection bas- -- baseline and performance data are essential to making a funding decision. Data should be meaningful, understandable, relative to the program's activities at the time you file them. Local commissions should determine criteria for data with approval from the Corporation. Programs should develop benchmarks with approval from local communities. Benchmarks should be supported at the minimum -- at a minimum annually to the local commission and summary documents of all programs should be submitted to the Corporation on an annual basis.

In summary, environmental issues, capacity, needs, data collection, evaluation, and proven outcomes should all be factors in sustainability. A plan should be a direct impact on funding decisions. The responsibility in determining whether or not the project satisfies -- satisfies criteria in these areas should res- -- rest in local commissions with approval from the Corporation. I'll rescue that because I didn't want to hiccup.

Thank you for allowing me to participate today.

MS. VAN DER VEER: Thank you, J.J. Great job.

Okay. And next is Kim.

MS. GRANT: Hello. My name is Kim Grant. I'm an AmeriCorps alumni with KISSS AmeriCorps in Killeen, Texas, and I currently serve as program director for MAAP, Making Assets a Priority in AmeriCorps programs sponsored by Metropolitan Dallas YMCA. I don't have much to say. I support a lot of what is -- what was already said by the panels that were up here, but I do want to encourage you-all to realize that the state commissions, I think, have more invested interest in what the AmeriCorps programs in the states are doing and how they're performing. There's a lot of subtle, intangible things in the programs themselves. I find that when I came to Dallas that -- I've been here six months, so it's not a lot of time, but the program, although sponsored by the YMCA, was also a sponsor of my current pro- -- my previous program. There's a lot of changes and transitions we're going through internally that our commission understands. There's an accreditation process that was referred to previously that is based more on not time but on percentage of development as opposed to we have this time period to make a change, and I would encourage that y'all consider that as well. Percentage of development as opposed to saying in one year or three years if you're not up to the standard but based on where you began if you develop by this amount or this degree and you progress this much, then you get to go forward and further -- further. I do not like the continuation application process. I'm still just learning it, but it's a hard thing, so I do encourage that three-year grant cycles be for three years before you use the continuation application process.

The YMCA is a great assistance for the AmeriCorps programs. The existence being 150-plus years old and what they bring in wisdom to the non-profit world really assists the AmeriCorps programs as well as the AmeriCorps programs and what they bring into being new babies in the whole process. It reminds the YMCA of the purpose of what they stand for, too, as far as community. Metropolitan Dallas YMCA serves a broad range of communities who have branches. Some don't have the power or the ability to serve as much as other branches do. AmeriCorps members at these branches are a great asset to the kids and the youth in those programs that are not available in all YMCAs, I guess is what I want to say, so I do support the YMCA partnership, and I do trust that you-all will keep in mind the AmeriCorps purpose as the sole rulemaking process is going on, and I appreciate that you've allowed me the time to speak. Thank you.

MS. VAN DER VEER: Thank you, Kim, for coming in and speaking to us.

Okay. Questions for this panel.

MR. EISNER: One comment and one question. Lauren, thank you for walking us through your own cycle as -- with AmeriCorps. I'm confident that half a century from now our SeniorCorps programs are going to be completely reformed as a result.

J.J., I want to make sure I understood -- I -- I really appreciated the list of factors that you gave us around sustainability. I want to make sure I understood when you talk about environment, job performance and the other factors, were you saying that we should use those as our perform- -- as our sustainability measures or were you saying --

what I think you were saying that they should be factors that we use in setting our sustainability measures, so if we're going to change matching or change the time frame of availability of funding that we use those -- you're saying that we should use those other factors to gauge how to do it right?

MR. HARRIS: You're correct. That's right.

MR. EISNER: Okay. You aren't -- okay. Got it. Thank you.

MR. HARRIS: I've got hiccups. I don't want to talk.

MS. MAUK: I have a couple of questions. Lauren, you said that perhaps the East Bay Conservation Corps should have had a sustainability plan in place and then you said maybe that -- that really wasn't their goal and then you kind of went on and so it must have been painful, I'm sure, for you to have seen it, and -- and so in -- I mean, in thinking about that and us looking at programs like that -- thousands of programs across the country that we wouldn't want to see closed if our funding got short or if we wanted to expand or et cetera. Some -- some thoughts on -- on what you think we should have asked the Conservation Corps or...

MS. KIELSMEIER: You mean at that time or just -- at just considering it?

MS. MAUK: Yeah. I mean, again -- I mean, it would obviously -- you know, I'm trying to see to it that you're helping us think of some ways of sustainability.

MS. KIELSMEIER: I -- I think it's tough when we have a national program that wants to establish -- establish itself, you know, brand it and build this big identity, and so I think it's really hard and it's only ten years old. I think it's hard to -- if you take away some of the value add that some of the funding that AmeriCorps goes to like the training for members -- you know, the service engagement training and CPR and diversity and conflict resolution, and when we're asking programs to do all of that and -- and bring in all the national service movement training, I think it's hard if you can take that away completely. It's hard to sustain that -- that kind of value add if you're trying to build a national movement with the program. And yeah, I think it was a very tough year all around or a tough couple of years with the economy and -- and everything, so it's -- it's just a challenge, I think.

MS. MAUK: And -- and, Bruce, I -- I think I heard you say that in your program that you do a 50 percent match.

MR. BAILEY: Yes, ma'am.

MS. MAUK: But that you wouldn't want it to be any more than that.

MR. BAILEY: We wouldn't be able to continue to carry on the quality that we've -- we've implemented in our program, or -- this year, just as an example, of spending 50,000 in local dollars to develop a realtime monitoring system to let us understand on a continuous basis the impact we're having on children by developing a computer software package that can relay back to our tutors exactly the progress they're making and how they need to tweak their tutoring and that type of thing. Those types of discretionary estimates that we made would never be able to occur because we just might put our

finger in the -- in the dyke and just keep the water -- you know, keep -- maintain any semblance of sustainability just to keep our doors open and pay our member allowances.

MS. MAUK: But did your program start out at a -- as a lower match and build itself up?

MR. BAILEY: We started out at a lower match. We were always above -- significantly above the required minimum. We also had many fewer members in the early years and we've been asked to continually expand the scope of our services. You know for every child that we're mentoring, you know, there are many more behind the door that we're not getting to and the other educators in the school who are dealing with young students understand, you know, it's a Sophie's Choice situation that we're dealing with in terms of who gets tutored and who doesn't.

MS. MAUK: Thank you.

MS. VAN DER VEER: Okay. Thank you to Lauren, Bruce, J.J., and Kim.

Okay. Nancy, Melinda, A.J. and Carla, if you could, come to the table. And then I want to ask -- I've got Bruce Esterline, can you come down here to the front row, please? You're the last presigned-up speaker that I have, so are there any -- is there anyone in the audience who would like to speak -- okay. Great. Can you come up here to the front row, too, please?

Anyone else? Just as long as it's up close here so we can move the next group up.

Anyone else? Okay. Very good. Okay.

Nancy, go ahead.

MS. SHARROCK: I'm Nancy Sharrock. I'm the executive director of the Oklahoma Community Service Commission. I'm going to address the sustainability issue, in general. We encourage the policy of a lot of state commissions to develop individual state assistance and policies for determining sustainability for our programs. One suggestion on how a corporation might monitor how we're doing that or whether we're doing that is we need marketing names for this, something like a sustainability rating for programs. The -- as a state, we would develop criteria for the rating for our programs, and in that, we would report in our applications to the Corporation each year, each three years, whatever, on that rating, and that rating would take into consideration their geographic area, the resources in that area, the organizational capacity of the program - - organizational capacity gets into some other things I'll go into -- and -- and performance. And performance breaks down into what they're accomplishing and that it's significantly documented and the experience for the member at the same time.

Organizational capacity is the ability of the organization to administer an AmeriCorps program. Which for us as a state, over the last ten years, we have noticed is not an easy deal. We sort of have a reputation for AmeriCorps' program that you get things done the hard way. It's a very complicated program for the average organization to learn how to run. They have to hire a program director who's program-oriented. They are a personnel director. They know educational guidelines in some cases and they might know construction in some cases, and they also have to be financial wizards to

manage this budget. The budget -- the AmeriCorps state budget if it could be streamlined would make or simplify -- would streamline all of this process. The budget has so many different requirements. The line items, the percentages, it's -- it's difficult for the average organization to run that type of program and manage that budget. That's what we're always dealing with on these federal shares and grantee shares. We're dealing with the complexity of this budget. We've had the lovely opportunity to operate fixed-cost programs through our AmeriCorps Promise Fellows program and a large educational program. It's just a whole different ballgame. The reporting is simpler. Everything about it is so much easier, which allows a program director and the organization to be behind the program to raise money, to keep track of performance, and to do the things that we're asking them to do that really are important that AmeriCorps is there because it's making a difference. And that's basically -- that's basically it.

MS. VAN DER VEER: Thank you, Nancy.

Melinda.

MS. POINTS: I'm Melinda Points with the Oklahoma Commission, and I'd like to just speak on performance measures. Our programs work with Project STAR to determine the best method of measuring outcome. I think what they really get bogged down in is what do you want to see at -- from the Corporation side, and I know that you are trying to figure out what results Congress wants to see. I think it would be much easier for us to kind of agree on what we're going to report. If you're an education program, we want to see results in this area because they know that when you go to Congress and try to report numbers, you can tell them how many members were serving in schools, but when they say what happened as a result of that, they need you to say well, some increased at grade level, some have fewer behavior incidents, and you're reporting so many things that really I think the impact gets lost.

So in Oklahoma, we're going to try to move this into standardized measurements. We've already done that in other -- around volunteer recruitment and citizenship. I really hope to take that a step further and do it in all issue areas because it's difficult -- I think the performance measure is the most powerful fundraising tool. To be able to shed -- say this is the impact we're having in this community and that's why we deserve funding or that's why we're asking for funding is because we can show you what we're doing with those dollars and those are dollars well spent.

So I'm just really kind of making a plea of -- really all of us are trying to agree on what it is we're trying to report on. Also, just bear in mind that any time you increase the requirements, such as participation in national service days, capacity building, citizenship, volunteer recruitment, and management, that the actual service outcomes get diluted. Any time you pull the members away from their actual service activities, that those numbers get diluted and then I don't -- once again, I don't think that we can show the true impact of what members are actually doing in the community, so thank you.

MS. VAN DER VEER: Melinda, thank you.

Okay. A.J., four minutes.

MR. HILLS: I'm A.J. Hills from American Youth -- I'm an alumni at American Youth Works ComputerCorps, and I'm a current student at American Youth Works Charter High School. And before I got to American Youth Works, I was at a -- was at a public high school, and I got in lots of trouble and got kicked out and so I started going to AmeriCorps and I want to tell you about my accomplishments there.

When I first got into AmeriCorps, I signed up for ComputerCorps, and I got into ComputerCorps, and right away, they taught me -- they taught me basic software skills, and I went out into the community and taught other people basic software skills, and I taught about -- at four different locations about four or five classes basic software skills. Now, I know how to write the curriculum for basic software skills. I wrote a few -- few curriculums. Last May, I was sent to a YouthBuild Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C. and spoke to a few Congressmen. And -- oh, I worked in labs at -- with at-risk youth and taught them basic computer skills and our organization teaches people how to use the computer and then we've got a basic software class where we teach them how to fix a computer and then they get their own free computer to learn -- to learn how to fix, and -- last year, April 2nd, I was given an academic excellence award, and -- and I'm -- and I'm graduating this June and I'm expecting to go to college. Before AmeriCorps, I never even thought about going to college and never even thought about finishing high school. I just wanted to make money, and with Ameri- -- American Youth Works, I went to school and they got me a job, and through AmeriCorps, I've now got a job as an -- as an administrator at Foundation Community, and that's -- that's what all your funding did.

MS. VAN DER VEER: A.J., thanks so much for your service and for sharing your story.

Carla, go ahead.

MR. EISNER: And before Carla speaks, I want to thank her. We actually had a site visit this morning with HIPPY Corps, which was really interesting and informative.

MS. WEIR: Thank you for coming, and I want to say I wish she was here. I -- with -- Susan and I, after that site visit -- because we tried to figure out an Excel spreadsheet that wouldn't work, so...

My name is Carla Marie Weir. I'm the state director for HIPPY Corps of Texas. I'm at the University of North Texas, the new Dallas campus, which is just down the road on I-20 and Hampton. Before we had HIPPY Corps as a state-funded program, we were part of a national direct funding program through our national program, HIPPY USA, and so I think that the perspective that we've had over that time period and also different kinds of funding application processes can help me really understand or, you know, really very clearly see that we definitely need to do some streamlining and especially as it relates to -- to the reapplication process. And so many wonderful things have been said here today that I fully agree with, and I'm going to try to focus on two things in particular that -- that have affected us adversely in our trying to not only have a very strong sustainable program but to try and expand our program to new communities because that's our goal as a -- as a -- we're a network of programs. We have six -- six subgranted sites across the state of Texas and so part of my job is to get new communities in Texas interested in this HIPPY and AmeriCorps combination.

HIPPY teaches parents of 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds how to prepare their young children for school, and the HIPPY and AmeriCorps integration of services means that we are

providing this service through AmeriCorps. Our AmeriCorps members are current or former HIPPY parents, and they visit other parents and what -- what better opportunity could we have to really energize a community towards community service than to identify these community service providers from within the community that we are serving.

The two issues that have really been difficult for us as we try to increase our -- our number of -- of programs in this HIPPY and AmeriCorps combination have been -- one is the non-federal match of 15 percent. As an education program, we work primarily with school districts and in some cases with charter schools and the 15 percent -- the match is no problem. We can come up with a lot of cash match but the 15 percent in non-federal -- Sylvia mentioned and I think I'm -- they might have left, but Sylvia who was working for the San Antonio Independent School District mentioned that when districts make their decisions, payroll comes first, and that payroll comes out of local tax dollars. There's very little left of that local tax money once they've taken care of classroom teachers, which makes sense. So to do any kind of additional program, which starting from before they even enter into the classroom, is considered an additional program. To do that, they have to get grants, and grants, by and large, are federal grants. And it's extremely difficult for us to piece together that 15 percent. We could increase our match greatly, but that 15 percent holds us back in many cases.

The second piece that's been difficult for us is the fact that AmeriCorps members are not volunteers, they're not employees. They're something in between and for school districts who are providing that in-kind cash match of these members and living allowances, they have no problem providing us our -- our -- our subgrantees don't have a problem providing that cash match, but they do have a problem figuring out how they can waive a lot of their other personnel requirements, for example, for a part-time person not being paid on an hourly basis but on a salary. We figured it out, but every time we try to get a new program started, it's -- it's starting from scratch again.

The other things that -- that fit into the same personnel piece are the hiring practices -- requiring them to go through hiring practices. So if some very clear language could be written into the provision, that would alleviate that and help them see that there is backup at the national level for them to be able to do these things that they typically go around their personnel and payroll requirements as a state or a -- or a school district entity, it would be a really big help for us to be able to spread that AmeriCorps word around the states.

Thank you for this opportunity.

MS. VAN DER VEER: Thank you, Carla.

Okay. Questions from Donna, David, and Rosie.

MS. WILLIAMS: I had a question for Melinda. You talked about streamlining the processes and that you and your state were preparing to do that. I want to know how far along are you guys or is it something that you can share with us in this meeting that we can take back and expand upon?

MS. POINTS: As far as standardizing performance measures, what we did in the application process, we wrote two of the performance measures and the programs actually only filled in the numbers around volunteer recruitment and citizenship, and

they were very grateful that we did that because those are -- the performance measures are tricky sometimes to -- to write. So at the end of this year will be our first year to have those.

MS. WILLIAMS: Okay. All right. Thank you.

And the next thing I had was a comment for A.J. I wanted to tell you that I'm so incredibly proud of you, and when you go to college, please major in a technical science.

MR. HILLS: I plan on --

MS. WILLIAMS: So please tell me it will be computer science or --

MR. HILLS: Yes.

MS. WILLIAMS: -- engineering or something that --

MR. HILLS: Computer science.

MS. WILLIAMS: Computer science. Okay. Great. Thank you.

MR. EISNER: Thanks. Nancy, I -- I thought that the idea of sustainability rating is interesting. Is that something that you or someone you know has already put some thought into that you can share with us?

MS. SHARROCK: Not exactly. It just something that we've been tossing around -- it's something we've been tossing around on how we might address this.

MR. EISNER: Okay. Well, if you -- if there's any, you know, formal or informal notes or thoughts. That's an interesting idea.

Melinda, also on the standardized measurements, would you appreciate or not appreciate -- it sounds like you really want to engage at the national level the national standards. I want to make sure that you appreciate that -- this has gone around a couple of times now, and generally, when we tried a couple of years ago to focus on standardization, we -- we received an awful lot of pushback and ended up coming up with our requirements for performance measures that ended up being very grassroots. My -- my feeling is that now we're beginning to hear more comments like what we heard from you that those don't roll up. We end up with too many different measurements, but it's still a little complexing for us to figure out how do we begin to focus on standardization in a way that respects the -- the bottomline system as well.

MS. POINTS: We were -- I -- I feel like we were very sensitive when we approached this because we did have a lot of discussions with our programs saying Are you okay with this? I mean, it just seems like we need to get some level of consistent reporting, and so I think that this is where we're getting bit at Congress is because -- because we can't really say clearly that AmeriCorps' having a huge impact in any particular area, so I -- I -- I appreciate the grassroots approach, but in reality, if our funding comes from Congress that wants to see impact and we're going to have to really show it, I think that standardization may be the way to go. I'm just trying to figure out what's the best way

to approach this because I've been with the Commission for nine years and -- and have lived through the AAR report and through the AAR map and really trying to find a consistent way for programs to report, and we didn't land on anything, I think, that really proves that we're doing great things in the community because we're reporting so many different outcomes. And so standardization may be the way we need to look at -- at reporting back to Congress in certain areas.

MR. EISNER: Carla, I didn't understand what your recom- -- I understood the challenge that you were fac- -- when you talked about the administrators at the district and school board level around personnel and payroll requirements and so forth. I wasn't sure what your recommendation to us was on how we could support the programs to -- to better deal with the administrators.

MS. WEIR: Well, I would love to be able to give them something in writing that says hey, it's okay for you to bend this rule. The federal government --

MR. EISNER: So some rule that says notwithstanding state law --

MS. WEIR: Yeah.

MR. EISNER: -- here's what you can do.

MS. WEIR: I mean, that's the only thing that -- you know, somehow they feel very vulnerable when they're being asked to, as they see it, subvert their local school policy. I mean, I've had people say are you kidding, that's illegal. You know, and you may -- you -- you feel like you're peddling drugs or something. I mean, it's not illegal. It can't be illegal. I mean, this is a federal program. You know, they couldn't ask you to do that and you take out the provisions and you -- you know, you -- you put them in contact with another school district that's done similar things, but it doesn't seem to be anything substantial that is in writing that could, like, prove it.

MR. EISNER: I think I understand. You know, if you would be willing to take a crack not in legal words but sort of what you want a provision to say that you think would make it easier for you to get by that, that we could then test with other folks to see if it made life easier for them, too, that would be very useful to provide to us.

MS. WEIR: I saw some people nodding their heads. I will be calling you in that collaboration.

MR. EISNER: Thank you.

MS. MAUK: Melinda, David and I are going to speak to you, but this is all addressed to the group. We're not going to say Well, Melinda takes the -- Melinda's talking about -- we're going to do this because it makes it easier to sell to Congress. What it makes me realize is for those of you and those of us who have been in the field for nine and ten years, that we are starting to understand what it's going to take for this to really be a movement -- a national movement, and -- but as we heard earlier, I heard our leaders of our commissions are brand new this year. It's a difficult program to understand, so I -- I -- I appreciate where you're at and we would love to keep working with you on this, but it's going to take, I think, some of you out across the country to help us move that way if that's what we need to do. Thanks.

MS. VAN DER VEER: Okay. Thank you, Nancy, Melinda, A.J., and Carla.

Okay. Can we have the next panel come up to the table and I think this is our last panel. And it's a good thing because we should finish just about right on time.

MR. ESTERLINE: Line up here?

MS. VAN DER VEER: No. Bruce, go ahead and sit down and you can go first and then the other two women who are volunteering to speak today, go ahead and make sure you state your name and affiliation for the record because I don't think I have you on our sign-in sheet, so...

MR. ESTERLINE: My name is Bruce Esterline, vice president for grants at the Meadows Foundation based here in Dallas. Welcome to Dallas, David, and Commissioners and Hi, Rosie. I haven't seen you since you went to Washington. You still look good. They didn't mess with you too much. I'm not real sure why we're here except that we just believe in AmeriCorps and your grantees. And this is an absolutely true story. I walked in here at 4 o'clock, and I saw two of my colleagues who happened to be standing in the back of the room saying -- just wave your hands -- two of the grant staff, and I said what -- what are you doing here? I mean, I -- are you going to, you know, testify or what- -- whatever I'm doing under oath. And they said no, we're just here to support our grantees. I mean, that's how I think we feel about the folks that you work with, and I -- it says a lot about my colleagues, and I thank you for that.

The -- the Meadows Foundation is a regional foundation here. We operate only grant making in Texas, so that's our focus. I've been with the foundation for almost twenty years, and I remember when AmeriCorps came on-line and I thought wow, this is -- this is terrific. I've seen a huge impact, I think throughout the state, and what do I mean by that. We -- our view of the world is that our -- the founder of Meadows Foundation said here's my personal fortune, go out and benefit the people of Texas and the only way we can do that is to find good non-profit partners, so for us to be effective and to -- and to preserve the trust that he put in us is to have a good, vibrant, growing, healthy, non-profit sector, and we think there are three basic legs under that stool, and they are adequate funding, a strong and ever-increasing volunteer base and good capacity building, and we've interpreted that to mean non-profit management, and we're proud to say that over our twenty-year history we've seeded the state of Texas with over a dozen centers for non-profit management, many of which are located in volunteer centers. In addition, we operate a youth volunteer program with Julie Thomas over here that runs the best volunteer center in the United States. And -- and so we believe in the power of volunteerism and we know that you have to -- you can't continue this unique institution of volunteerism without growing it each and every generation, and I think AmeriCorps does a great job in that.

The other thing it does is it brings resources to agencies and one of the things that we as a funder are aware of or are looking at was would -- would the agencies that were already in business sort of use AmeriCorps funding and AmeriCorps folk to sort of supplant what they were already doing, and my distinct impression is they maintain their -- all their levels of effort and then -- and then increase and raise the bar with the AmeriCorps support and resources, and I think that's attributed to -- to everyone involved.

We know the national budget is tight. I guess I'm here to talk about -- maybe I heard the word "sustainability." We're all about that. We heard about performance measures. We think they're vital, but in terms of sustainability, I guess we know that the national budget is tight and getting tighter. State budgets have gone way off the -- the -- the track. Local and now the ripple effect and we know our non-profit sector's in the middle of a perfect storm of budget cuts, and we at -- in the foundation world are no exception, and even if we weren't being hurt by 15, 20, and 30 percent declines in our own capacity -- what does that yellow light mean?

MS. VAN DER VEER: It's an --

MR. ESTERLINE: One more minute?

MS. VAN DER VEER: Right, you have one more minute.

MR. ESTERLINE: One more minute.

We cannot be the safety net of the safety net and so we've all got to sustain each and -- all of our efforts. And I think our motto today is keep the faith and preserve the trust, and I would recommend that to -- to the Commission. We, indeed, also enjoy our privilege of working with the Texas Commission, with Charlie Briggs, and -- and when Rosie was over there, we think it's important for funders to -- to collaborate at that level -- at the state level and look at strategic issues that can be solved down the pike.

Although our funding was cut, we maintained our giving level and we embarked on our first-ever campaign to provide emergency grants to organizations and one of yours was just here in the room today sitting here. We just made a grant, Steve, what, two week - three days ago to help keep them whole while we wait for AmeriCorps to kick back in. In fact, part of our testimony was we used your picture and your bio in our -- in our grant write-up with the promise that the end of -- the light -- the light is at the end of the tunnel.

Thank you very much.

MS. VAN DER VEER: Thank you, Bruce.

Okay. Our next speaker.

Please remember to state your name and affiliation.

MS. PRATT: Yes. I'm Francine Pratt, and I am assistant director of professional services at Catholic Charities Diocese of Fort Worth, Incorporated, a longer name than the Corporation for Community and National Service. And I also am an adjunct faculty member at the University of Texas in Arlington School of Social Work. My testimony today comes from my experience as one of the former directors of a successful nine-year AmeriCorps program that was based in the university setting. It speaks to the issue of federal share of costs. The development of our AmeriCorps program began by involving potential community partners in the Tarrant County area and this process continued throughout the life of -- of the program. It was clear from the beginning in 1993 that our partners, the local and non-profit school districts and local government, would provide both cash and income match.

While our program always met required match, it was a continual challenge. One of the non-AmeriCorps functions of my job at the University was to locate and secure corporate entities and foundation cash -- cash match. While our fundraising efforts were continual, they were never real- -- they never realized the goal that we independently set for ourselves so that we would have a better program to go above and beyond the member -- oh, gosh, I've lost my train of thought -- the member stipends. Thank you. And -- actually, thank you, Francine. And we -- the -- this reality was pretty staggering especially to me in that our program existed within a large state-supported university environment. It was just amazing that this cash problem existed, so reflecting upon that experience as I've had three years to kind of sit back and think about it, I kind of came to some conclusions about the things that impacted securing of cash. And a few of these include the larger community does not fully understand the concepts of AmeriCorps, nor its level of impact. While our program staff went above and beyond to educate the broader community and develop partner coalitions, local officials and leaders, for whatever reason, chose not to help us build the supporting infrastructure needed for corporations and community foundations to find a reason to give, and Rosie, I know you and I've talked about that because in Fort Worth it was -- it wasn't there. That -- that willingness wasn't there, and I don't -- I really don't know why. Our community partners struggled with funding for their own agency constituent services, so our community partners were funding their own base services that they had to continue funding, and they were -- they were, you know, struggling with getting the money for that, so the AmeriCorps program enhanced their overall scope of service delivery, yet it was costly to them because we had to pass through the costs to them to meet our -- our members stipend, match and -- and our other match, so that was burdening on their budgets in an increasingly tight economy.

Then the local economy provided opportunities for member recruitment -- really, it did because people were out of work and were graduating from college and needing -- needing something to do that was meaningful, but it wasn't necessarily successful in funding the -- in the funding requests. Corporations had less to give while foundation investments declined; thus, the competition for local dollars was tight and it still is.

And finally, as fundraising by AmeriCorps staff is prohibited by federal regulations and the infrastructure around the program could not support the massive staff efforts required to identify through the external dollars needed, we just weren't able to sustain -- I don't see how we would ever be able, if the program existed today, to sustain an increasing match -- cash match requirement, so therefore, I ask you to maintain the current match requirements and find -- find ways to increase to capacity and sustainability on the local level and partnership with the state commissions and individual programs.

Thank you very much.

MS. VAN DER VEER: Thank you, Francine.

Okay. Next speaker.

MS. DANE: I'm bringing up the rear, I guess. I'm Brenda Dane. I'm a program director for the Southwest Louisiana Area of Health Education Center, AmeriCorps Health Corps. I came from Louisiana to Texas. I also am a peer-reviewer for the Corporation for National and Community Services, which is a great opportunity for anyone. I suggest you do it.

I just want to say that there's -- there's a difference between social capital and human capital and that sustainability requires social capital partnerships. Most of the partnerships are planned in advance and often on a wing and a prayer and can be a logistic- -- logistical nightmare based upon grants being funded at different times during the year, so therefore, I'll give an example -- and this is especially true in rural communities who have limited access to money for human capital and to find jobs, much less serve, because many of the living allowances are very, very low. I had a program - - I had a partner who wrote AmeriCorps members directly into the grant as the people who were going to actually create this grassroots effort. And when the pause came, they had not yet been enrolled and this particular program who had received half a million dollars to do a fantastic pharmaceutical access program, transportation network, and overall community impact was going to be huge and AmeriCorps members were the sustainable factor in this whole initiative, we were un- -- unable to enroll, and they were -- they almost got closed down. They had to get permission -- special permission to go back and start over again. So we had this great program planned and -- and as a result of the cutback and then the pause, you know, we had some challenges.

In any case, the stipend is necessary. To expect these communities to become self-sustaining is unrealistic. Therefore, in order to create a program based on human capital creating impact, the Commission should be able to create their own sustainability plans based on the communities that will be impacted by potential programming. Part of the sustainability plan includes looking at the tenured programs. I agree with Mr. Bailey when he says that if you have a tenured program, who has been in -- doing -- having successes, utilizing them as a model or potential mentor to new programs coming into the pipeline to allow them to reach the top of the bell curve much quicker and utilizing the forms and all the tools and all the enrollment stuff that goes along with it and to help them become sustainable.

The idea that I'm specifically using in my program is to reposition members, to partner with other organizations and projects in need and then diverting those members after certain goals are met. That creates a true ebb and flow in the -- with the Corporation, itself, and within the program. We know that sustainability can't occur without changes in systems, which is why we're here today.

As a multisite, multipartner program, with forty indicators of impac- -- impact across the board, the strategic movement of slots to new partners after a two-year place- -- placement allows collaborations with social capital partnerships to begin a friendly, competitive process for slots. Let me just say that there's a -- this is a non-territorial competition that creates value for those AmeriCorps slots as -- as thriving members among the community. It's obvious that the cost per FTE is an issue. My -- my commission set my costs per FTE much lower than other programs who did not generate the kind of match I was able to, and as a program with a second round of funding, I'm one of the lucky ones. I purposefully cut the Corporation's percentage to be lower to force partners who had already hosted members to increase their funding match with my members.

Ending -- by ending the program with time limits is not the answer. Ending programs who are tenured with time limits is not the answer. I say looking at programs that are created is -- is the key. And I see my red light. I -- I have a lot more to say, but let me just say that I'm -- I want to say that I'm holding in my hand a sustainability packet of a \$50,000 grant that was given to the Office of Emergency Preparedness. Homeland Security was purposefully written into my grant because I knew that that money was

coming down the pike and now all of my members will be trained as community and emergency response team members, and I will get all of my volunteers and homeland security deliverables met with this envelope right here and that was because I went out of the box looking for money. And -- and I think a lot of programs can do that and -- and tenured programs can have a sliding scale of sustainability.

MS. VAN DER VEER: Thank you, Brenda. Thank you for coming from Louisiana to Texas.

Questions for this group.

MS. WILLIAMS: No.

MR. EISNER: Bruce, I have a few for you. Start at sort of -- almost a philosophical lesson or practical lesson. Do you -- do you agree that -- with the overall proposition that over time a program should be able to attract a greater level of community support so that a -- what might be an appropriate match request for a new program becomes less than appropriate for a program that's in its -- in its stride?

MR. ESTERLINE: It's a trick question, isn't it?

MR. EISNER: It's the question. It's one we're wrestling with.

MR. ESTERLINE: You said there'd be trick questions. The -- the short answer would be yes and no.

MR. EISNER: That's a trick answer.

MR. ESTERLINE: It's a trick answer. If I followed you and I don't know enough about where you're coming from in terms of the AmeriCorps matching ratios is that I would start with saying if the federal government thinks it's a good idea, they should keep doing it forever as long as it's showing performances that you -- whatever that's all about. You don't stop doing something that's good and worthwhile. But if your share -- if the -- if the national share needs to be offset by some appropriate and predictable sort of -- sort of downstepping, we do that with our own grants, but we -- I think you need to telegraph to folks what that -- what that staircase looks like and don't change the rules somewhere in the middle. And -- and I don't -- and then there's a maintenance of effort and maybe that's 50 percent or 45, but again, if you -- if the Feds started it, they ought to finish it.

MR. EISNER: You actually just went right into what my next question was, which is: As a grant maker, you -- I think one of the things that started this whole set of questions is where does dependen- -- at what point does dependence move into unhealthy territory? Then there are programs where we're routinely -- our federal assistance routinely makes up 60, 70, 80 percent of their overall operating expenses.

Do -- do you have a set -- and the question is: Even if we start there, what do you think would be an appropriate plateau level and -- and obviously we're not going to put the percentages based on what you say, but just to get an order of magnitude...

MR. ESTERLINE: I -- I think -- I must also first confess that we at the Meadows Foundation and most of our foundation colleagues do not fund programs in perpetuity, so I'm -- I'm pointing the finger at you and -- and avoiding that responsibility on our end. But now having said that, I would -- I -- I -- the kinds -- the kinds of federal matching share things that -- that kind of come to mind that sort of seem fair to a funder, I think, is when -- when the national contribution might, you know, start out at 75 and then maybe downsize to somewhere in the 50 or perhaps just under that. I -- I think at 50 percent -- and as long as I'm speaking philosophically, that's not -- I think that's beyond -- that's somewhere less than dependency. It's predictability. It's core funding. It's -- it's reliability. It's, as I say, preserving the trust. Being able to -- you know, to get a broader base of support -- and we use that language all the time with folks we partner with -- I think is -- is good business and -- and -- but yet, the debate, I guess, continues about where that -- you know, where that -- where the floor is and where the -- where the ceiling is and how you negotiate that, so I -- I don't think there's an ironclad one, but I would like to think that -- that if programs with ten-year histories are showing -- are meeting the needs and -- and showing the -- the outputs that you're looking for, they ought to be continued at a decent level.

MR. EISNER: Thank you.

Let me use some of what we heard from Francine that sort of challenged you, Bruce. Challenging in a good way -- in a good way. Clearly the Meadows Foundation has stepped up to the plate. I guess the question I'd ask you is: Do you think that in general the private sector has and are there other things that we in the Corporation or the other supports could be doing to -- on the support side -- we heard earlier a person testifying saying that the state -- their state commission -- I think it was Oklahoma, but I'm not for sure -- said that they provide increasing matching requirements and that they also -- they also provide increasing assistance for organizations to achieve those matches. Are there other -- do you think we're tapped out here as far as the funding community or are there other things we can do to get the funding community to provide greater assistance to programs?

MR. ESTERLINE: Well, I think -- I guess, again, the short answer is there -- there is more work to be done. The first part of your question is the -- has the other, you know, players in the -- in the philanthropic and private sector stepped up to the plate. I -- I think when it comes to -- the kinds of grantees, and that's -- that's the only context I can sort of put your question in. The City Year, Teach for America, some of the other folks that we work with are, I think, highly attractive and compelling organizations. I mean -- and the fact that they are either built around AmeriCorps systems or -- or incorporated them into their existing programs has made them stronger, so I think at -- at -- at that level -- at the grantee level, that they are -- while it's a tremendous burden, I recognize -- I think that -- and again, if I'm saying this right, the kinds of grantees that I've seen that have your funding are highly competitive organizations that can do -- would be, I think, very attractive to most funding entities if -- as long as they know about them and learn about them and -- and interface with them and -- and you know, that's -- that whole consciousness thing, so whether you can be doing more at the national level -- I think Charlie and -- and the Commission and we've done some stuff on a state level to -- to bring funders together and talk about what -- what's coming down the pike and what some of the big issues are and always looking at what the impact is on the grantees because we're not in the business of supporting the state of Texas and -- nor the federal government, per se, but it's -- it's all about keeping our eye on the -- on the folks on the street. So I think more could be done maybe in terms of

bringing funders together at -- in national conversations, state conversations where efforts can, perhaps, be focused early on in the process. And then it may take a little bit of a load off the local grantee; is that -- is that --

MR. EISNER: Yes. Thank you.

MS. MAUK: I have nothing to ask. I'm going to pass on this.

MS. VAN DER VEER: All right. I want to say thank you to everyone who came today and particularly to those who shared their ideas with us through their testimony. I don't think there's any surprise that we heard a lot of good recommendations and comments here today in the home state of Rosie Mauk.

MS. MAUK: I don't think my mother would like that comment.

MS. VAN DER VEER: Well, she's actually from Iowa, and I know that because we actually grew up in the same hometown, so I've not had the pleasure of meeting Rosie's mother. But I -- I want to say one thing before we close out here, and that is that we've let you stay engaged in this process. In terms of this iterative, back and forth sort of dialogue that we've been hoping to have over the past month since we've been doing these rulemaking public sessions, that's going to end on Monday with our last teleconference call. If you're interested in being on that call, there's a blue flier at the -- at the front where you signed in, and on that flier, it tells you how to register for that conference call, or you can fax your comments or e-mail your comments -- the e-mail address is right up there on the banner. That's why we put it there.

So in the next couple of days, if there's something that hasn't been said that you feel needs to be said before Frank and his team start writing these rules, please e-mail us or fax us or get on that final teleconference call. And then the Texas One Star Foundation, Charlie Briggs and Susan Weddington and Celeste and the crew, has invited all of you to come right next door to a -- to a reception, and I think most of you now know that the One Star Foundation of Texas now is doing business as a state commission, so in celebration of all that and the end of our public rulemaking meeting, I'm going to go next door, but I'd like to turn this to Dave Eisner for the final word.

MR. EISNER: Let me not take any more time, except to say thank you, thank you, thank you. As we have with each of these meetings, we've learned a lot. I know I learned a lot at this meeting. The one thing I didn't learn because that's already pretty much ingrained is the level of passion of our grantees and the level of expertise and professionalism of our -- of our commissions and our grantees at -- I hope that we're able to do you justice and that you're able to read the rules that we draft, the promise of long-term stability, consistency, and predictability, and see the future of strong bipartisans or strong public support for the program and a very strong future, so thank you all very, very much.

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(End of meeting at 5:03 p.m.)

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